MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

A Comprehensive Chat With Ed Brubaker, The Writer Of Captain America, Daredevil And Criminal!

ED BRUBAKER

BILLY TAN

Billy Tan Talks X-23, Spider-Man And Uncanny X-Men, With Never-Before-Seen Character Sketches!

Plus: An In-Depth Look At Deadly Genesis And Uncanny X-Men With Ed And Billy!

DIRECT EDITION

7 59606 05845 7 00911

$2.99 US $3.75CAN

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PLUGGING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

This month's *Spotlight* spectacular is our special *Uncanny X-Men* theme issue, where we have the attention of that book's unbelievably talented creators, writer Ed Brubaker and artist Billy Tan! Right now, the team of Marvel Girl, Havok, Polaris, Nightcrawler and Warpath are being rocketed into outer space, led by Professor Xavier, in a desperate bid to stop the deadly Vulcan from triggering an apocalyptic space war with the Shi'Ar — and you're a stowaway on board! If you've never been on space patrol with the X-Men, don't be afraid: *Spotlight's* got your back on this mission! (We're the ones hiding behind Warpath!)

First, we talk with writer **ED BRUBAKER** about Daredevil, Captain America and how he became such a big, bad, important dude at Marvel Comics in such a very short time! We have an in-depth look at his current writing credits, as well as a glimpse into his upcoming Icon project, Criminal, a straight-up crime comic delivered with no apologies by Ed and artist Sean Phillips *(Marvel Zombies)*.

Next is our *Uncanny X-Men* feature section, where Ed and artist Billy Tan discuss their approach to taking the wheel of the X-Men Universe's flagship title…and steering into outer space! I don't know about you, but I love an X-Men epic that's a rip-roaring, star-spanning, space opera. Ed and Billy's *Uncanny* run feeds the imaginations of like-minded X-Men fans with a story that builds off of almost thirty years of history, when Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum first had the X-Men square off against the Shi'Ar. We have a probing interview with Ed about how he started this whole thing rolling in the *Deadly Genesis* mini-series, and what he's setting up for future issues of *Uncanny*, and Billy and Ed guide us through the cast of characters that will make up the team.

And finally, *Spotlight* sets our sights on the career of **BILLY TAN**, in an exclusive interview that covers his work on *X-23* and *Marvel Knights Spider-Man*, as well as the growth of a career that has its origins in his home country of Malaysia and in the studios of legendary X-Men artist Marc Silvestri!

We hope that this issue of *Marvel Spotlight* will supplement your enjoyment of *Uncanny X-Men* and increase your knowledge of the two star creators who are bringing it to you!

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MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

ED BRUBAKER • OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

REAL NAME: Ed Brubaker
DATE OF BIRTH: 1966
PLACE OF BIRTH: Naval Hospital, Bethesda, MD
OCCUPATION: Comic book writer
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Seattle, WA
WEBSITE: www.edbrubaker.com
FIRST COMICS APPEARANCE: *Dark Horse Presents #65, 1992*
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE: *Captain America #1, 2005*

HISTORY: Ed Brubaker was born into the life of a Navy brat, in the tow of an enlisted dad who carried his family around various ports of call after his service in the Vietnam War. Very early in his life, Ed found himself living at the now-infamous Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, a US Navy installation located in a small parcel of US-controlled land on the southeastern tip of Cuba. For age four to seven, Ed was a citizen of "Gitmo," and to him, it was a great place to be a little kid while his dad served in Naval intelligence. Ed and his siblings enjoyed spending balmy summer days playing out on the base and getting to watch *Planet of the Apes* and kung fu movies at the outdoor movie theater, and on one pivotal day in Ed's life, his dad came home with hundreds of comics that were given to him by co-workers whose kids no longer wanted them! If that wasn't enough to turn him into a comics zombie, the fact that the base PX sold only Marvel Comics turned him into a Marvel zombie!

His early love for comics manifested in a desire to become not a writer, but a pencil artist. In Ed's young mind, his first projects would include *Captain America, Spider-Man,* and *X-Men,* so that should give you some idea of where his leanings were. But then he turned fourteen and his discovery of punk rock and alternative and European comics changed all the default settings of his pop-culture mind. From then on, he stopped looking at what the mainstream offered altogether, preferring books like *American Splendor* to *Captain America.*

Though a terribly bright kid, Ed hated school. He liked learning but hated regurgitating information in the form of tests, and he never went to college. The bug to write, however, was definitely a part of him, and he found himself writing pulp fiction material at the request of artist friends like Eric Shanower, who took a script Ed wrote for him and turned it into a story that was printed in *Dark Horse Presents #65-68* as "An Accidental Death." Ed's first story was a critical hit, to the degree that it was nominated for an Eisner Award!

Ed's career path continued to yield lucky breaks when his "Accidental Death" partner Shanower was approached by Vertigo, and he pulled Ed along with him. His indie snobbishness having placed him completely out of touch with mainstream comics for over a decade, Ed developed a pitch for Vertigo under the misimpression that they were a "young adult" imprint. Surprisingly, his pitch for the satiric *Prez* was accepted, this one by the very mainstream DC Comics! Later, Ed's talent was recognized by two DC editors, Shelly Roeberg and the late Lou Stathis, who were both early advocates of Ed's writing. Shelly insisted that Ed fashion another proposal for Vertigo, which resulted in *Scene of the Crime,* a noirish detective mini-series that was published in 1998.

Scene of the Crime was Ed's big breakthrough in mainstream comics, getting him more recognition than ever before and hooking him up with artist Michael Lark, a creative partner-in-crime that he has worked with on various projects ever since. From that point on, Ed's workload has never lightened up. In fact, he soon found fans in DC's Bat office and was asked to pitch a Batman project that turned into *Batman: Gotham Noir,* a one-shot in collaboration with Sean Phillips, another artist with whom he would build a strong creative association. Finding himself at home creating mainstream comics with a sense of populist fun, it wasn't long before he was writing more Bat books, like *Batman, Catwoman* and *Gotham Central.* During this time, he also wrote *Point Blank, Sleeper* and a run on *Authority* for DC imprint Wildstorm, and all the while, the awards and critical acclaim kept coming his way.

His move to Marvel came with the hopes that he could take on a bigger and more influential writing role than he was able to achieve at DC. That wish came true instantly, as his first book with Marvel, a revamp of *Captain America,* was not only the critical hit he was accustomed to, but a commercial hit as well! Ed was allowed to play around with critical elements of Cap's past, a brave feat which proved to pump up the enthusiasm of a franchise that had grown somewhat stale in the eyes of longtime readers. He was also able to craft a pivotally important tale in *X-Men: Deadly Genesis,* which brought to light several long lost characters from the X-Men's past. His next major project is to continue the story he set up in *Deadly Genesis* in the pages of the X-Men's flagship title, *Uncanny X-Men.* He's come a long way from Guatnanamo, but Ed Brubaker has arrived as one of Marvel's most creative – and most important – writers of the decade.

THE ED BRUBAKER MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:

Books of Doom #1-6 (2006)
Captain America #1-up (2005-06)
Captain America 65th Anniversary Special (2006)
Marvel Spotlight: Ed Brubaker/Billy Tan (2006)
Uncanny X-Men #475-up (2006)
Wha…Huh??? (2005)
X-Men: Deadly Genesis #1-6 (2006)
Daredevil #82-up (2006)

COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:

Fantastic Four: Books of Doom Premiere HC
Captain America: Winter Soldier Vol. 1 Premiere HC/TPB
Captain America: Winter Soldier Vol. 2 Premiere HC/TPB
Captain America: Red Menace Vol. 1 TPB
X-Men: Deadly Genesis Premiere HC

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

Marvel Spotlight had the opportunity to speak with Ed Brubaker on multiple occasions recently to cover his overall writing career and his tenure at Marvel, which is a good thing because there is lots to talk about! His indie career writing gritty crime comics took him to DC, where he advanced his game with highly acclaimed work on *Scene of the Crime* and *Sleeper*, and settled into a long run on *Catwoman* with Darwyn Cooke. Looking at the last couple years at Marvel alone, Ed had transformed *Captain America* into one of Marvel's biggest fan-favorites, picked up *Daredevil* from Brian Michael Bendis and made it even *more* popular than it already was, and delivered two mini-series that have become essential reading in their respective canons: *X-Men: Deadly Genesis*, the story that sets up his ongoing series on *Uncanny X-Men* and *Books of Doom*, the mini-series that explored the history of Marvel's greatest villain. Throw in his upcoming crime book on Marvel imprint Icon, and like we said, there is lots to talk about! So let's get crackin', Ed!

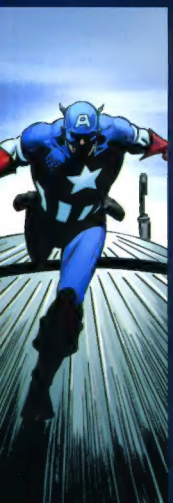
SPOTLIGHT: Let me ask you about a sort of stereotype that has surrounded your career before coming to Marvel, that Ed Brubaker is the "crime guy." You are so at home in the genre, and at the same time so incredibly successful at it, that it has logically followed in some people's minds that that is all that you can or want to do. But I'm sure that there have been points where you may have felt that you didn't want to be "the crime guy."

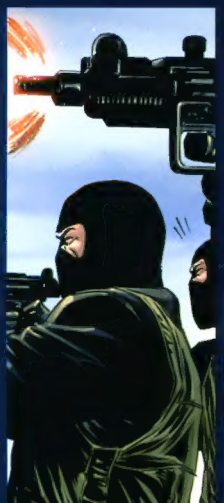
ED: I feel like I'm a pulp writer, in a way. All of that has been out of being able to understand the structure of mysteries and crime stories, which has been so helpful in writing super-hero stories, because the basic plot of a mystery is still the same as any kind of pulp adventure, and super-heroes grew out of the pulps. But also, I never want to be pigeonholed. If there is any comic book guy that is someone that I would look at as a career model at all, it would be Alan Moore, in the way that he is someone who does every genre. *Dead Enders* was a sci-fi romance comic, you know? *(Laughter.)* For a long time I was trying to convince someone at DC to let me do a romance comic. Because *Lowlife*, my comic that I wrote and drew myself, was sort of a semi-autobiographical comic, but a lot of it had to do with romantic ups and downs.

I like all kinds of stuff. It just turned out that I thought I was going to be "Mr. Serious Alternative Cartoonist Who Only Writes Very Serious Fiction or Autobiography", and then I wound up discovering mystery fiction, after having previously dismissed it. I always thought it was kind of stupid for some reason, even though I loved mystery movies. But I sort of became obsessed with them in my late 20s and early 30s.

CAP IN ACTION!

Ed Brubaker writes the fight scene and Steve Epting draws it! Boy, do they ever! These scenes of Captain America battle action are from *Captain America* #1.





WITH ED BRUBAKER

I discovered Ross Macdonald and basically read every book that guy ever wrote and realized that he had grown out of the pulps. I read a bunch of Raymond Chandler, and became obsessed and read all his novels, and Dashiell Hammett, and soaked in all this stuff over a number of years, to the point where I realized that I was full of it for dismissing that genre as serious literature.

A lot of people forget that Shakespeare was a popular writer. He wasn't trying to write serious literature; he was just writing like everybody else, he was writing to earn a living and to survive and entertain people. It's only now through the passage of time that he's regarded as a serious artist, just like Chandler and Ross Macdonald are now considered some of the great writers of the 20th century. They were pretty well dismissed by the intelligentsia at the time. Chandler had this great quote that if Shakespeare had been alive in the 20s, he'd have been working for the pulps, because that was the magazine that reached the widest amount of readers. That's what all writers want to do: to reach a ton of people. I sort of became obsessed with that and then I started writing mysteries. I went from being someone who pretty much only read really serious fiction, non-fiction and really arty comics to being someone who embraced the pulp aspects of the medium and actually enjoyed that stuff on just a pure, "reading for enjoyment" level.

It was a pure accident through Steve Weissman, a cartoonist who is a good friend of mine who does a book called *Yikes*, that I had Ross Macdonald forced on me. Through that I think I rediscovered a love of reading for pure enjoyment. It opened my mind and now I realize that in my late teens and early 20s, I think I was full of it in the same way that almost all teenagers and young people tend to be full of it. I thought I knew everything about life and art and what was important, when in reality, reading for enjoyment, and writing things for people that they can get lost in- on a pure enjoyment level- is not a trivial thing in the least. I think that's what I hate about how dismissive, for instance, the *Comics Journal* and a lot of the alternative comics people are about mainstream comics. They're unwilling to see the craft or just read something for enjoyment. Everything has to be something that should be hung up on a museum wall.

SPOTLIGHT: The kind of writing that wants to supposedly "change your life!"

ED: Exactly! But you never know what's going to change your life. Reading Ross MacDonald changed my life, even more than Shakespeare! And I love reading Shakespeare. *(Laughter.)* But I really don't mind if people want to see me as "the crime guy." I hope they do, because I have a crime comic coming out! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Another thing about your career of late is that you have been given the opportunity by Marvel to come in on your books and really shake things up. Daredevil, Captain America, and now the X-Men, you've really created some defining moments in their respective legacies.

ED: I guess to some degree, but other than bringing Bucky back in *Captain America*, I don't think that anything that I've done is the kind of thing that anybody else shouldn't be able to do on their books; it's just that most people are afraid to do it. I think the thing that I learned in the Bat Office at DC over the three or four years that I was there was that if you don't do stuff like that on your books, nobody is going to remember you. I mean, there are people who like my *Batman* run, but more people remember my *Catwoman* run, which is where I really took risks and really shook things up and did things that people felt like you shouldn't be able to get away with in a *Catwoman* comic. Like when I had someone yanking an eye out and feeding it to somebody. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Mmmmm…..yummy….

ED: The implications of that act and what it does to readers, the people remember those *Catwoman* stories more than they remember almost anything I did on Batman. The reason I was able to take risks on *Catwoman* is that nobody cared about her at the time. Her book was on the verge of cancellation before I got offered the gig, and I was pretty much told I could do anything I wanted, so I thought, "Cool! I'll make it a pulp comic!" I had seen what Brian was doing with *Daredevil* and I thought I could do a similar thing with *Catwoman*. I could have the East End be her neighborhood and just tell the kind of stories I wanted to tell, even though it's a super-hero comic.

So that was a bit of a breakthrough, and when I came to Marvel, I had been in comics steadily since 1998 so I had a good six years of steady writing under my belt, so I knew the basic chops of the job. And I also knew the characters really well, like Cap and Daredevil, and I had these gut instincts on what I should do to shake them up. Conveniently, Joe, Axel Alonso and Tom had already gone through this huge argument about the idea of bringing Bucky back. I didn't know it at the time, and so when I talked to Joe about taking the job, I said, "Well if I do it, I want to bring Bucky back." *(Laughter.)* My theory is that every person who has ever written Cap, if you're writing it right, you want to bring Bucky back. If you're writing it wrong, it means you're being too reverential to everything that came before. You don't want to piss on everything that came before, but at the same time you don't want to hold up everything that came before as The Gospel that cannot ever be altered, because then you just get stagnant.

SPOTLIGHT: As part of the responsibility for handling these types of revolutionary change, do you fear for potential fan backlash?

ED: There were times where Brevoort and I were talking before *Captain America #6* came out where I was saying, "Maybe we should have Bucky be a robot!" *(Laughter.)* I was sort of getting cold feet, but at the same time, Tom and I were both alternately nervous and excited about it, because we thought we had a really good story. That was my feeling. I thought, "If you're going to do something like that, you can't just do it as shock value, you have to do it because it adds something to Captain America." As a writer, you can't bring Bucky back just because that is something you wanted to do since you were four years old. You have to actually make it part of the story. Like, why is that an interesting story? How does it affect Captain America? What does that do that hasn't been done to Captain America in a long time, or ever?

The story of Captain America to me has always been one of a guy and his teenage partner who lived four years side by side in World War II seeing the harshest stuff in the world and still being heroes at the end of the day, no matter what it took. The tragedy for Captain America was the Stan Lee retcon where Bucky got blown up. I remember, as a kid, just being so upset about that, how there was no actual comic where Bucky blew up.

FRIENDS IN FREEDOM!
Captain America and Union Jack team up in *Captain America #19*.

I had the issue where Gwen Stacy died, I had the issue where Uncle Ben gets killed, and they were actually comics that were part of the run, but when I found out that there is no issue of *Captain America* that I could buy where Bucky gets blown up, I was really upset.

SPOTLIGHT: That's an interesting insight. For an event that never was actually portrayed in any Marvel comic, the death of Bucky is one of the most referenced flashbacks in all of Marvel comics: Bucky hanging off the end of a buzz bomb, or drone plane, or however it has been referred to over the years, has been an indelible image in the minds of Marvel readers.

ED: I always thought, if there's no comic, how is he dead? Having now read every issue of *Captain America* multiple times over the last few years, that story has been told something like eight different ways! *(Laughter.)* There are so many different versions of that story, but he's always on a plane, it always blows up. So I thought, "Why does he have to blow up?" I mean, Cap was found, and he has the super-soldier serum, and I thought, "Well, what if there's a story where Bucky didn't die?" I remember talking to Mark Waid about this, and he was like, "Oh, I don't know if I would have ever brought Bucky back." And I'm like, "But you *did* bring Bucky back for something like two issues in your run!" Because *everybody* wants to bring Bucky back! I was just like, "Let's bring him back and let him stay!"

DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK! He's been here for years! Bucky surfaces in the Marvel Universe in Ed's Winter Soldier epic!

SPOTLIGHT: And so you brought him back, the process of which provided the storyline for your Winter Soldier epic in *Captain America #1-14*. What are some of your observations and reflections about that whole enterprise now that it's been done, and how it has influenced the Captain America mythos?

ED: Bucky was one of my favorite characters as a kid, reading *Tales of Suspense*, those old stories where he's running around with a machine gun taking on the Nazis. I always thought Bucky was so cool. I also liked the fact that Captain America, of all Marvel heros, was the only one who had actual time pass in his life. There's a certain amount of time, a five-year period, where time did definitely pass for Captain America. In all the current Marvel and DC comics, time doesn't actually pass, at least not in the right way. We always look back that the time of the origin is ten to twelve years in the past. Well, for Cap, ten to twelve years is the time that he woke up in *Avengers #4*, but before that, he had five years of being Captain America that can never be changed. There's this five year period where they grew, they aged….Bucky, the Human Torch, Namor, they fought for five years in a war!

So Bucky is not a teenager when he died, unless he was nine years old when he became Bucky. My feeling was that Bucky was fifteen or sixteen, and when he got blown up, he was twenty or twenty-one. By the end of the war, he's a man, not a teenage sidekick. I always thought he'd be an interesting character because he was different from Cap. Brevoort and I talked about that a lot, because we thought that Bucky was really the kind of kid who would have picked on Cap when he was a skinny guy. He was the brawler of his group. He was an army brat, and army brats get into a lot of fights. Growing up on military bases, I've seen plenty of them and been in plenty of them. You're a military brat, you're moving every two years, and you're having to go to a new school and you're having to get into fights. It's just a whole different life. And on top of that, Bucky is an army brat orphan! *(Laughter.)* He's gonna be a tough little mother. I looked at that and thought, if we had a kick ass enough story, we could do anything. If you've figured your story out enough that it excites you, your editor, and the artist you're working with, then you're set.

You know that most of the people who complain are going to probably still keep reading it, but we were worried that we were going to alienate a bunch of people with *Cap*. So we really wanted to make sure that this was a very organic story and that it made sense, and that it had a purpose, and the gratifying thing about this is that the majority of the people who were really against the idea of bringing back Bucky have been won over because what we're doing with that story is not what people expected. It's funny, there were people who were actually more angry about the WWII flashbacks, where we had a page that showed why Bucky was actually worthwhile to the Invaders.

SPOTLIGHT: Actually, that was my favorite sequence in the book! The depiction of Bucky as a down and dirty special ops kind of battlefield soldier was very arresting, made you stop in your tracks as a reader.

ED: Michael Lark is giving me that page. I don't have it yet, but he's giving it to me. I'll have it framed on my wall for the rest of my life. I saw that whole scene in my mind after my first conversation with Tom Brevoort, when we were talking about Bucky. I was like, "Why is

Cap, Falcon and Iron Man take on a giant robot in *Captain America #13.*

a teenage kid running around with a super soldier, the prince of Atlantis, and two guys that can light themselves on fire? All Bucky can do is hold a gun!" *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, we know now that wasn't all he could do!

ED: Tom was like, "What if Bucky was not just some kid trained by Captain America?" Cap is given this job by the military, and Bucky is on the military base, so obviously he's gotten military training, too. There's gotta be a better reason for Bucky being the sidekick; that whole idea of him being a symbol of being against the Hitler Youth was kinda lame, and Tom said, "Bucky is this scrapper, he's a fighter, and that's what makes him worthwhile, and he can do things that Captain America can't be seen to be doing." A lot of folks got mad about that. They didn't think that Bucky would do anything that Cap wouldn't do. My feeling is that I don't think Cap *wouldn't* do them, but while there are news reporters in the trenches with him, shooting newsreel footage, you don't want to have Captain America, who is the symbol of all of America, being shown gutting people with a knife. "It's not like Cap didn't do the same things every other soldier had to do."

That's what really bugged me about Cap in the late 80s and early 90s, when they completely sissified Captain America. Here's a guy who fought in WWII for five years and you're telling me he never killed anybody? It was war. What use is a super soldier who won't kill anybody? So I completely ignored that. I was like, "No, Captain America and Bucky killed people. The Invaders killed people. It was a war, and in war, soldiers kill people."

SPOTLIGHT: Have you thought of doing any more classic Cap stories set in that time period?

ED: I'm doing one right now, and Gene Colan is going to be drawing it. I wrote the opening scene for him, but we had to put it off for a little while, but he should be working on that. I finish up the script in about a month. It's going to be a forty-page story.

SPOTLIGHT: And Gene is going to do all of that?

ED: Yes! He's got an inker and a colorist and he's really excited about it. It should be out next summer. It was going to be just a single issue, but Gene wanted to do more, and so I suggested we just do an annual. I bugged Tom Brevoort about it and so we're going to do it as an annual. But you know, it has to stand on its own. It's set in WWII. I asked Gene, "What do you want to draw?" And he said, "Let's do darkness and rain." And I was like, "Captain America, World War II, darkness and

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BUCKY, BEHIND ENEMY LINES: Trained to exact lethal tactics against the Nazis, Bucky was very good at what he did! (Flashback scene from *Captain America #5.*)

"...WHILE OUR ADVANCE SCOUT CLEARED THE WAY.
"WHICH IS THE REAL SECRET OF WHAT BUCKY WAS.
"THE OFFICIAL STORY SAID HE WAS A SYMBOL TO COUNTER THE RISE OF THE HITLER YOUTH...

THE RETURN OF DOOM

Recently, Dr. Doom made his grand return in the pages of J. Michael Straczynski's *Fantastic Four*. Shortly before that, Ed Brubaker took on the task of updating the "good" doctor's origin for a new generation. That came in the form of *Books of Doom*, a six-issue miniseries that was beautifully illustrated by artist Pablo Raimondi. Ed's story delves not only into the history, but also the mind of Dr. Doom. The story is told through a series of interviews with Doom, and others who knew him throughout his rise to power. But all may not be as it seems. Explains Brubaker, "With a character like Dr. Doom, he's so bombastic, that when he's telling you his life story, it's like you can tweak the details around a little bit to make it so that he is coming across as the hero, because everyone likes to come across as the hero in their story."

Certain things remain constant, though. There are pivotal moments in anyone's life, but Brubaker centers Doom's story around moments that would make the word "pivotal" seem to be mere condescension. As many readers know, Doom's mother, a gypsy sorceress, was long ago condemned to Hell for dealing with dark forces. Brubaker discovered this aspect as a young reader. As he relates it, "It was a story that Gerry Conway and Gene Colan did, where Dr. Doom was going to basically try to free his mother's soul from Hell. I remember reading that and thinking my whole life that that was this key element to understanding Dr. Doom, that his mother was trapped in Hell, and that he was trying to free her soul, which adds this tragic element to Dr. Doom."

The final turning point for Doom comes due to his other parent. Persecuted and on the run through the snow-driven Bavarian mountains, his father freezes to death, holding his son in his arms trying to keep him warm. This was dealt with only in passing in Doom's original origin story, but Brubaker sees it as worth more exploration. "He can't move, because his father's arms are frozen around him, and he's sitting there waiting for hours for someone to come rescue him. That's what drove him insane, what made him think of his mother's soul, and I used that as this pivotal moment where he goes from being a strange but normal and harmless kid, to the guy who becomes the megalomaniac that invents things that freeze people, and burns them, and sends them off to other dimensions."

There are of course, the controversies. One of the longest-running debates in the fan community is "What lies behind Doctor Doom's mask?" Different creators have had different answers over the years. Even Stan Lee and Jack Kirby reportedly disagreed, with Stan feeling Doom should be hideously scarred, while Jack opined that the ultimate irony would have Doom scared of facing the world with nothing more than a simple, tiny scar; an inconsequential blemish blown to huge proportions by Doom's megalomaniacal vanity. Longtime *FF* writer John Byrne combined these approaches, suggesting that Doom started off with a simple scar, but in his desire to cover it up, put his mask on fresh from the forge, thus irreparably burning his face. Brubaker has his own take, but he self-effacingly acknowledges it will remain a matter of debate. "If you read the Kirby origin story, Stan Lee has it written in there about, 'Don't worry about the mask cooling, he doesn't care.' So you can see where Byrne got that from, but I thought it was a bit much. I don't know. People probably think that about everything that I change! *(Laughter.)*"

Books of Doom is a moving and intriguing character piece starring the premiere villain in the Marvel Universe. It's out now in Premiere Hardcover, at finer stores everywhere. Don't miss it!

— by Matt Adler

rain. Okay, I've got it." *(Laughter.)* So it's an anniversary kind of annual, a special thing, but for me, Gene Colan is one of my favorite artists of all time, and to get a chance to work with him, it's amazing. Now, if they could get me John Romita…

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of great artists, you've got to believe that part of the way that *Captain America* has been resonating with fans is because of the work that Steve Epting and Michael Lark have done in drawing your scripts.

ED: Michael did all the flashbacks and I love the way he did them, but I would have loved to have seen Steve do them. He's done some of the flashback scenes in later issues, and it seems like nobody even notices that they're not drawn by Michael. *(Laughter.)* I don't think their styles could be any more different, other than that they're both fairly realistic. I had a list of about two or three people that I wanted to draw Cap, and his name was near the top of it because of the stuff that I saw from *El Cazador*, and some of the covers he had done with Cap on them. He came up in my first conversation with Brevoort, and they were looking for a monthly for him, and I was like, "Get him!" The only problem with Steve is that he's a little bit slow. He can't keep a monthly schedule, because he pencils and inks himself. I mean, you've seen what his stuff looks like – it's mind blowing.

To me, I feel like I'm working in the classic era again. I think that's a large reason why some of those old time Cap fans are still around, even if the idea of bringing Bucky back horrified them. The reality of it is that it looks like a classic comic in a lot of ways. Steve's biggest influences as an artist are obviously John Romita, John Buscema, the classic super-hero guys.

There's that scene in issue #1 where Cap is throwing his shield as he's leaping off a building onto the top of a train, and the way that Cap is drawn in there, it was like a combination of Romita and Buscema, it was so amazing. But the sequence of the action….as much as I had loved Epting's stuff, when I got those pages, I was like, "Oh my God! I am never giving up this artist!" When Cap is fighting those terrorists on the rooftop of that train, and it's like a six-page sequence, it sells you on how cool Captain America is. He throws his shield, and it cuts through the tail-fin of a helicopter, and when his shield comes back he catches it and he's running straight at these guys. The choreography of that scene might be the best action we've actually done in the book until maybe issue #13, when we had Cap, Iron Man and Falcon fighting together. That was totally bad. I should have probably not forced Steve to do an issue with twelve pages of action right before I gave him the big finale of Cap and Bucky fighting. But he doesn't mind drawing all action.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the things that is notable about Cap are those elegant and vibrant fight scenes. How do you approach writing fight scenes? Do you have particular ideas of choreography in mind when you are writing?

ED: A little bit of it is giving the artist a lot of leeway to make it work the way they want to., especially with Michael and Steve. With Steve, I've noticed that when I tell him, "Okay, here's what basically has to happen, and here's basically the amount of space you have to do it," he winds up using a lot more panels than I would expect him to use. Initially, I thought we don't need that many panels, so with Steve I tend to give him leeway to do what he wants, but I tend to write a fairly choreographed action scene for him, but often it's just "Someone punches someone and they go flying." *(Laughter.)* I know he'll make that look cool. Also, with Steve, I've found I can describe something that sounds impossible, and he'll just draw it and it looks amazing, so I take that liberty sometimes. *(Laughter.)*

With Michael, I tell him what I want in there and he does whatever the heck he wants to do and it always looks great. I've worked with Michael for eight years, and he knows where he can take liberties and where he can't. He knows where changing one thing will alter a story and where it won't. Steve is the same way. I'm lucky to have guys that like the scripts that I give them, and tend to not have a problem with following them. That's the worst thing that can happen to the writer of these things, to write a script and have the artist completely draw something else. I've been lucky enough to stick with the guys that I like, because they don't do that kind of thing, or if they want to make a change, they will call me and suggest things. I totally welcome that input from them.

TARGETTING A MEMORY: Bucky is back as the Winter Soldier, a man at odds with his friends, with past, with reality itself… but not with his capacity to kill.

HE'S NOT IN PRISON? What is Daredevil doing out on the streets if he's supposed to be behind bars? (From *Daredevil #83.*)

ED BRUBAKER: MAN WITHOUT FEAR

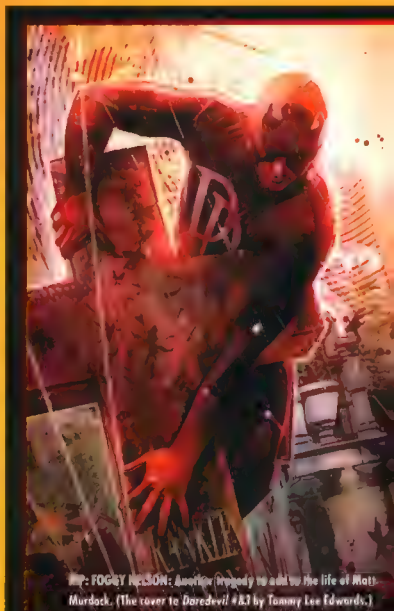
SPOTLIGHT: Turning our attention to *Daredevil,* you approached this project with a certain amount of fearlessness. You killed a major supporting character and placed Matt Murdock in a situation of unparalleled jeopardy; again, you really come in and shake things up, but it's a little more seamlessly done than the events in *Captain America.* In talking with artist Michael Lark, he mentioned that all this was in concert with the previous DD writer, Brian Michael Bendis.

ED: Yeah, to a certain degree. I wasn't going to follow what I thought was the best extended run on any Marvel character in ten years by pretending that none of it happened, which is what I think happens sometimes when new people take over books. I tried not to do that on *Cap,* either, but there's a certain amount of permission a writer gets when starting over with a new #1; you can sort of reboot things a little bit, or change things around, but I was not going to do that on *Daredevil.* I'm not going to push the reset button on the things that Brian did. I think that everything they did on that book was great! So then I thought, well, what do you do if you're not going to do that? You take it to the next extension, you take it as far as you can go, to the wall, and so I told Brian, "Well here are some ideas I've got."

It turned out my second story idea- having Matt thrown in jail I– was something that Brian had been toying with doing himself. Brian said, "Well, I have been considering ending my book by throwing Matt in jail, but I haven't done that because that's too mean to the guy who follows me. But if you're the guy who follows, and you want to tell that story, what if your second story was your first story instead?" So I just figured out a way to combine elements of both stories with the whole idea of Foggy getting shanked. A lot of bad stuff was going to happen to him, and that was going to be the straw that breaks Matt's back, so I combined those elements and made that my first story. I think working with Brian like that helped me get the gig in a way. Joe and Brian will tell you that there was never any doubt that I was getting the job, but I never got the official okay until a month before I had to start writing the book. So, while everybody was acting like it was a done deal, it was never a completely done deal to me, but Brian says they were just stringing me along just as a joke.

SPOTLIGHT: *(Laughter.)* That's what Michael said, that they were screwing with you.

ED: They told Michael straight up, because Michael told them that he only wanted to do it if I was writing it. The plan, when he came over to Marvel, and when I came over, is that we would end up taking over *Daredevil.* We started talking about it almost a year before we actually started doing it. I remember sitting in the car with Bendis and Maleev when they were here in town, Michael was here, we were all in town for the Emerald City Con, and they came over for dinner, and I drove them back to the hotel. They were in the back seat, Michael and I in the front seat, and Bendis said, "Hey, check it out! Old *Daredevil* team, new *Daredevil* team!" And I was kinda like, "Oh, I hope I get the job!" *(Laughter.)*



RIP: FOGGY NELSON: Another tragedy to add to the life of Matt Murdock. (The cover to *Daredevil #8.1* by Tommy Lee Edwards.)

BULLSEYE IS ALL ACES: Unleashed in prison, Daredevil's fiercest, Bullseye. (*From Daredevil*

To me, it was all about following Brian's run, keep doing what he's doing, which is raising the stakes and putting Matt in these situations, and at least in the first storyline, have as organic a handover as you can possibly have in a book that is that good. When you follow a book that's that good, it is completely a challenge. You can follow a mediocre run, or follow a decent run, but following a great run is really hard. But, you want to, in a way. It's too easy to do the other…I've done the other stuff enough times, where I've taken over books from people who were just despised on that character. I've done that a couple of times…and I'm like…well, I don't want to talk about Robert Kirkman's *Captain America* out of school, but…*(Laughter.) (You know, I'm kidding…)*

But, you don't want to disappoint people, you don't want to let down those fans, and I thought that with Brian working with me so close with me on this handoff, it was exactly what that book needed to not lose readers when the most popular team in comics leaves it. Not only did we not lose anybody, but we've been gaining people. The fact that Brian left Matt Murdock in prison, and instead of ignoring it I just thought, "Okay, what happens to Matt Murdock in prison?"

SPOTLIGHT: This storyline was already rich enough pared down to the basics of Matt being thrown in jail for being Daredevil, but you've been importing all these other cool little variables like Bullseye and Punisher, to really broaden it…

ED: Oh yeah, well, it's not like we're ever going to be able to do this story again! *(Laughter.)* We're not going to be able to throw anybody else in jail.

SPOTLIGHT: Is this a reflection of any particular crime scenarios you have always wanted to tell? Perhaps some sort of "inside prison walls" story from crime fiction that the "crime guy" in you has always wanted to tell?

ED: You know, not as much as you might think. It's more of just, what would happen to Matt Murdock if this actually happened? It totally grows out of him, but it also grows out of wanting to do this insane storyline that nobody would expect. Throwing these elements like Kingpin and Bullseye, Hammerhead, and all those things into it, it just kept people guessing. "Oh my god! Punisher's in here now?" Even if they don't wind up doing a lot in the story, just the fact that they're there, it's the ultimate "someone in the Marvel Universe is thrown in prison" kinda story!

SPOTLIGHT: That's how you as a writer get to leverage all these years of Marvel back story and make it work for you.

ED: Exactly. So I get to write the Punisher, and I always thought he was totally cool, especially when he appeared in the Frank Miller *Daredevil,* so it was like, "Okay, I gotta put the Punisher in there." That was conveniently timed where Marvel had just announced the Punisher coming back to the Marvel U, and with the *Punisher War Journal* book, and they got a big boost off of him suddenly being in *Daredevil.*

SPOTLIGHT: Even some of the minor characters you have in there, I really liked how you wrote the Black Tarantula character.

ED: Oh yeah, me too. He is a character I stumbled upon through editor Warren Simons. I was telling him, "Look, I need a Latino character and I can't use the Tarantula because apparently he's dead!" So Warren sent me two or three characters. I liked his name, which is Carlos La Muerta. I did some research and found he was this incredibly well-educated South American guy who would not normally talk like a gang banger. But you know, when I moved to Hawaii, within three months I was speaking pigeon English, because otherwise I'd get my ass kicked. When you're a Latino of any kind, whether you're from South America or Spain or Mexico, you go to prison, and you start hanging out with the other Latino gang members, and everybody in prison starts talking like they're in prison, for the most part. Matt Murdock and the Kingpin are the only ones in that prison who don't talk like that, other than Morgan. I'm actually going to use Black Tarantula later, during the second year showing what he's like when he gets out of prison.

SPOTLIGHT: The thing I really liked about him was that he was completely on to Murdock and he wasn't going to be given a bunch of bull about it, but at the same time, he kept his cool. He didn't force the issue, but he let him Murdock constantly know that he was onto him. I love the way you wrote that into his dialogue.

ED: He's a really fascinating character. I'm still debating whether, when he gets out of prison, he'll be a good guy or a bad guy. *(Laughter.)* I just know he's going to be in the book again, because I really enjoy writing him. Every now and then a character just takes over like that.

SPOTLIGHT: The theme of your *Daredevil* seems to me to be, at least currently, is found in the idea you put across that "Daredevil is the *real* Murdock held in check." In other words, the vigilante super-hero is actually a representation of Murdock in restraint. The real Murdock has all this rage inside of him that is held in check by being the superhero and carrying with it the attendant ideals. But there are other things he'd rather be doing at certain times….

ED: Yeah, that was the idea, when you see these moments where he gets pushed over the edge, and he's got this rage and violence that's inside of him. In the Frank Miller intro to the *Man Without Fear* collection, he talks about how Matt Murdock would have made a great bad guy. He's got all the right elements to be a good bad guy. Thinking about that, his history, he's got that stuff. Being Daredevil at all is in a way his expression of the side of himself that his father made him suppress. The idea, for this story at least, is that there is a part of being Daredevil that he continues to suppress, which is that rage and that violence that he lets loose a few times. For me that is what the first story was all about, his being pushed over the edge and struggling internally. He doesn't struggle with it that much, but it's basically his realization of what he could be, but he goes back the other way, because it's more important for him to be a good person. That's what the first story is about: what does it look like when this guy is pushed completely over the edge and people *should* be afraid of him? But at the same time, he's Matt Murdock, he's got this stable center to him. When Foggy gets shanked, Matt goes over the edge. He thinks, "They've taken everything from me now." But what he doesn't realize is, they really haven't. There are still other things he can lose, like spending the rest of his life in a cage. *(Laughter.)* That could suck.

I don't know if you've been to jail ever, but I've spent a few days in jail, and that's all you need. They say there's no such thing as rehabilitation, but if you put the right person in jail for a few days, at the right time in their life, they won't ever need to be rehabilitated because it's totally a scared straight kind of thing.

Sure, I was in jail for about eighteen hours once for something stupid, so I had a similar experience.

Yeah, you never want to go there again. The loss of your personal freedom, and the people you're shoved into a cage with, and the idea that you can't leave, it's horrifying. Even the worst job that you hate so much, where you're looking at the clock, you can walk out any time you want. But in jail, there's no clock, and there's no walking out… *(Laughter.)*

Not to mention no Marvel comic books, unless they get snuck inside your cell inside a cake! Thanks to Ed for sitting with Marvel Spotlight to discuss Daredevil and Cap! He's not going anywhere on these two titles, so if you're not one of the many enthusiastic readers who follow along monthly, get caught up quick! These are some of Marvel's best comics of today…or even yesterday!

PRISON? IT'S A RIOT! Michael Lark draws a stark depiction of Ed's savage prison riot in *Daredevil* #86.

THE "BRU" UNIVERSE: ED BRUBAKER'S CRIMINAL

Starting in October, Ed Brubaker gets to show off his status as comics' preeminent crime fiction writer with *Criminal*, an ongoing monthly series from Marvel's Icon imprint. Ed's sterling reputation at crafting graphic fiction in the genres of crime and mystery goes as far back as 1992, when his collaboration with Eric Shanower (*Age of Bronze*) resulted in the story "An Accidental Death" from *Dark Horse Presents*, which earned the pair an Eisner Award nomination for Best Writer/Artist team. Since then, Ed has built up a loyal fanbase that knows he is without peer at integrating the stylistic elements of a good crime plot into super-hero-universe-related books like *Sleeper*, *Catwoman* and *Batman*. At the same time, many fans hearken back to the straight-up crime fiction of *Scene of the Crime*, his seminal work with Michael Lark and Sean Phillips (for which he was nominated for the Eisner Award for Best Writer), and wish Ed would do more formal crime writing, without the conventions of competing comic genres getting in the way.

One look at his book's title — *Criminal* – and it shouldn't take long to figure out that Ed is bringing the goods in a big way. Another thing he's bringing along is artist Sean Phillips, who was part of that killer creative team that put together *Scene of the Crime*. Fresh off his big hit *Marvel Zombies*, Phillips is putting the tautly wound drama of Ed's stripped-down suspense scripts into startling relief with his pencils. Ed is on hand to give *Marvel Spotlight* a closer look at *Criminal*.

SPOTLIGHT: You're juggling major titles in Marvel's canon like *Daredevil*, *Captain America* and *Uncanny X-Men*, and you're not messing around in any of them. What gives you the confidence to start a creator-owned project like *Criminal* at this juncture in your career?

ED: I think between the popularity of my Marvel projects and Sean coming off *Marvel Zombies*, which is his biggest project in the American market ever, we're on a lot of radars right now, both readers and retailers. Way more than when we did *Sleeper*, so I think we'll do well enough to keep *Criminal* going for years. The *Sleeper* trade paperbacks have done amazingly well, and continue to sell, so I always knew that if Sean and I did something like this, just a straight-up crime comic, we would step up to the plate and really jump up to the next level of success.

The one complaint that I ever got about *Sleeper* was from some people who would pick up a few issues and stop buying it, and they would say that they liked it, and they thought it was really well done and they liked Sean's art, but they didn't like that there was this super-hero element to it. Some people just flat-out refused to buy it because it took place in the Wildstorm universe. They just didn't wanna read another super-hero universe. They're already sick of universes as it is. And I'm like, "But you read *Planetary*!" People don't realize that *Planetary* takes place in the Wildstorm universe. And I ..ah, I just killed the sales on *Planetary*, and it's one of my favorite books. But anyway… *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well that's okay, we're Marvel, so that's a good thing! *(Laughter.)*

ED: Yeah, exactly. You want that. You want Ellis and Cassaday over here! *(Laughter.)* But for me, I broke in writing crime stuff. That's the first stuff I ever wrote: for Eric Shanower, I wrote a crime comic, for Michael Lark I wrote *Scene of the Crime*, and Sean also worked on that with us. I always wanted to get back to doing that, and that's where I'd always gotten the most interest from Hollywood and foreign publishers and all sorts of stuff. And with *Criminal*, it's true creator-ownership, which is really unique in comics. And to have that, really makes me want to just give it all. This is the book I was born to write.

SPOTLIGHT: So is that the attitude you're bringing into *Criminal* with Marvel? That this is one of those books that's in you and it's got to come out?

ED: Yeah, totally. See, the creator-owned stuff I noticed that was really catching people, was, like, Ellis' *Fell*, and Kirkman's *Walking Dead*, and, you know, Scott Pilgrim and just all sorts of stuff, and I thought, "I should just tap into this thing that I've got, this jones that I've had for years." I really wanna do just straight-up crime fiction, and just do it differently than I see anybody else doing it in comics right now. I'm willing to write this for free, basically, is how I approached it. Getting to do a creator-owned comic with a guy like Sean Phillips, that you actually have full ownership of, you know – this isn't the way we did *Sleeper* or the way we did *Scene of the Crime*; we actually own and control this property. For every story that we do in *Criminal*, we will have complete oversight on every aspect of it, down to the foreign publishing and the movie rights, all of that – and to have that kind of ownership is amazing – and then, not only to have it, but to have it publishing through the biggest publisher in comics?

SPOTLIGHT: Now, what about the stories you're going to tell with *Criminal*? How much has gone into your conception of what you want to do with the book?

ED: The first storyline is something I actually wrote the outline for about five years ago, so it's now turning out different than the outline I wrote, but, you know, I've had these characters in my head for years and years, and in a way it's like I'm trying to create the sort of, you know, "Bru Universe" or something. *(Laughter.)* You know? Like, all these characters exist in this same sort of unnamed world that they live in, that looks just like ours and feels just like ours, like if you live in any sort of urban metropolis, this city looks like that.

SPOTLIGHT: Bru Universe…I dig that! *(Laughter.)* Will the book include a consistent cast of characters?

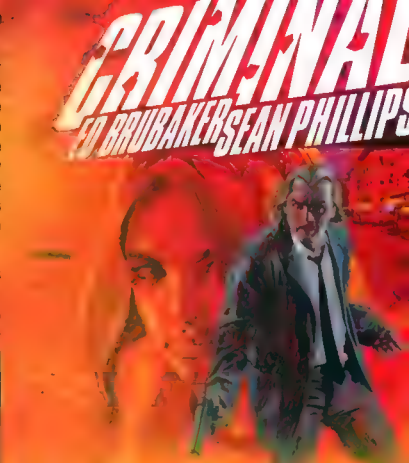
ED: Yeah, there's a loose-knit group of characters. The first main character we meet is a guy who is a pickpocket for a living, but he's also one of those guys who can walk through any sort of heist scenario and figure out the best way to do it with the least exposure, the least amount of damage to anybody, and the least amount of violence involved. He's one of these guys who has got those eyes: he can see the flaws in any sort of security setup and he can see how to get around them, and that's why he's valuable within the criminal community. He abhors violence, and he won't work jobs with guns, and there are all these rules that he lives by, that he refuses to break, and so it winds up that he doesn't make a lot of money.

The next main character that we meet is a guy who is that character's friend from childhood, they grew up together. They all have these links, the main characters that you meet, and there are sort of four or five main cast members who will be the focal points of the book, and they all have

this family history together, they all have this history that dates back to their childhood, to their parents all being, you know, criminals, and it's about everything that's interesting to me about the criminal fraternity and the criminal society, the underbelly of society. There are people who live outside the law, on the edge of the law; one of the people in the story is actually a cop who is a bit crooked, but not necessarily a bad guy, but he's not the most honest of policemen, you know? And the reason is because in the world that he came from, where his parents were criminals, and the people that he grew up with, most of them were professional thieves or murderers, and he knows these people. He knows that they're actual people, they're not just statistics. I find that stuff fascinating. And there's a tragic element to it – that there are people who want to live outside the system, because of what the system and the world does to you. And I find that really a fascinating thing to write about.

I also wanted to create a book where I could do any kind of crime story under the sun, you know, and that was something that I thought about for a long time. When I saw *Sin City*, the thing that blew me away the most about what Frank Miller was doing in those books was that he was using the same characters over and over again with just different stories that they were getting involved in, and I thought, "You know, that's a brilliant way to do it." I don't wanna do the same kind of thing where the city is the main character, necessarily, but I wanted to try to find some way of a balance between that and some of my favorite European crime stuff, like *Alack Sinner*, by Munoz and Sampayo.

Really the thing that I love about crime fiction and detective stories and stuff is that – how close they are to autobiography in a way. The things that these characters go through and the things that they believe and the things that they say always come from the author, or always come from some



part of the writer's life, whether it's through friends, or things that they've observed, or things that they've felt themselves, and they're putting it in the structure of this crime story, you know, because if you're a writer who's fascinated by crime stories, you're constantly figuring out ways to commit crimes that you'll never actually do.

The only crime we're worried about is the one you'll commit if you don't give Criminal *a shot! Reserve your copy of the first issue now, and look for it in October!*

CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

Like *Scene of the Crime* or *Sleeper*, Ed's *Criminal* is bound to enter into the "top favorites" lists of many crime fans during its run on Marvel Icon. Naturally, Ed has his list of favorite books, movies and TV shows in the crime genre, too, and he shares with *Marvel Spotlight* his top five list!

1) ROSS MACDONALD'S LEW ARCHER: I love the Lew Archer books, especially *The Galton Case* and *The Goodbye Look*. Some of the best books I've ever read. Period.

2) OUT OF THE PAST: Robert Mitchum's best movie, other than *Night of the Hunter*, maybe. My favorite noir film by a mile. Best ending of all time.

3) VERONICA MARS: The best mystery show ever made in America. Rob Thomas is my hero, as is Veronica. C'mon, she planted a bong in someone's locker to get revenge; that's just badass. She's like Harriet the Spy in a post-punk world, and it's funny and tragic all at once. My favorite broadcast TV show.

4) YOU GOT NOTHING COMING: By Jimmy Lerner. The best memoir about prison life I ever read. A big influence on the first DD arc, as well as almost anything about prison you've seen in the last few years, including *Prison Break*. Brian Azzerello turned me onto this one.

5) KISS KISS BANG BANG: Shane Black quit Hollywood for a few years because he hated what they did to his scripts, and then he broke his own mold. This is the best crime movie I've seen in years. I've watched it a bunch of times and it gets better with each viewing. It's my new *Big Lebowski*.

UNCANNY X-MEN:

SPOTLIGHT: One interesting thing to note about *Deadly Genesis*, your mini-series that is responsible for getting a lot of the action in Uncanny X-Men rolling, was that Marvel's EIC Joe Quesada was out hyping it — rightly — as one of THE big titles to look out for in 2006. I'm not quite sure that people were listening. It really *did* do a lot to rock the world of the X-Men: past, present and future.

ED: In general, Marvel learned a lot from *Deadly Genesis*. Remember about 6-8 months ago Marvel started actually releasing more stuff in their preview information? They would actually start sort of telling you in the solicits, "This issue's important because of this;" as an example, they put out the *Daredevil* cover with Foggy's grave on the cover. *Deadly Genesis* was one of the reasons they did that, because they learned from that that you actually need to give readers and retailers a bit more information. We had been being too coy for too long, going, "This is important! This is going to shatter the foundations of the Marvel Universe!," all without telling readers why, and after a while they were just kinda like, "Yeah, yeah, you say that every time." So with *Deadly Genesis* they realized if we had advertised even just one of the big moments, it would have gotten noticed earlier and in bigger numbers.

For instance, we saw this enormous spike in sales when we said that the mystery of the third Summers brother is going to be solved in *Deadly Genesis*. Reorders for the first two, and orders for issues 3 and 4 went way up all of a sudden. It's sad for the fans that follow this stuff too closely; I always feel bad because I grew up not having Previews, and being able to go to the store and see what was on the shelf, and never knowing what was coming next…that was so cool! I always tell fans to just not read that stuff. If you're buying *Daredevil* every month, don't read the previews for it.

SPOTLIGHT: I skim the previews for comics that I pull each month, but I don't give them a close read. I love Previews for seeing about comics that I don't read each month, and for upcoming trade collections.

ED: Yeah, just look to make sure that, you know, me and Michael are still doing *Daredevil*, and then you're golden. We're not gonna let you down, you know? You don't need to read the solicits for *Daredevil*, or even look at the covers, you know? Wait 'til it gets to the shelf, or wait 'til it gets into your pull box or whatever, and just be like "Whoa, cool!"

SPOTLIGHT: That's good advice. So in *Deadly Genesis* you had a comic that raised its sales levels as it went on, with each issue getting more and more attention?

ED: Yeah, we actually dipped a little and went back up the other way. *(Laughter.)*

I don't know how we ended, but we did pretty well. I think our first issue, after the variant cover and the reprint and everything, we did around what *Astonishing X-Men* was doing.

SPOTLIGHT: Why did Marvel think you were the guy to galvanize the post-House of M mutant universe changes? You had never written a mutant comic or a Marvel team book…

ED: *(Laughter.)* This is more of Brian Bendis trying to prove to me that I could be some kind of top ten, big-name writer … or that I already was, but didn't realize it or something. It was him saying, "This is a big thing, Ed can write a team X-Men book, and he just doesn't realize it yet!" *(Laughter.)*

VOLCANO: A DEADLY GENESIS: Most Vulcans, because of Spock and Star Trek, are cool… but, boy, he's angry. Debuting in Ed Brubaker's *Deadly Genesis* mini-series, he is the reason Xavier has banded this group of X-Men together for another mini-series in addition. Where did you get the *Deadly Genesis* art?

A CREATIVE GENESIS

Brian sort of signed me up for that job by saying that he would co-plot it with me. He was at one of the summit meetings in – I think – January of 2005, maybe? He sort of said, "I'll work on this with Ed, and you can get my name on it, too," and then he called me later and he said, "Privately, I just want you to know, the minute you start working on this I'm gonna sort of back out of it and say I'm too busy, because I don't think you need me on this. Especially by the time the book comes out, because of Captain America and everything else you're doing at Marvel, you'll be a big enough name that they're not gonna even *need* my name on it."

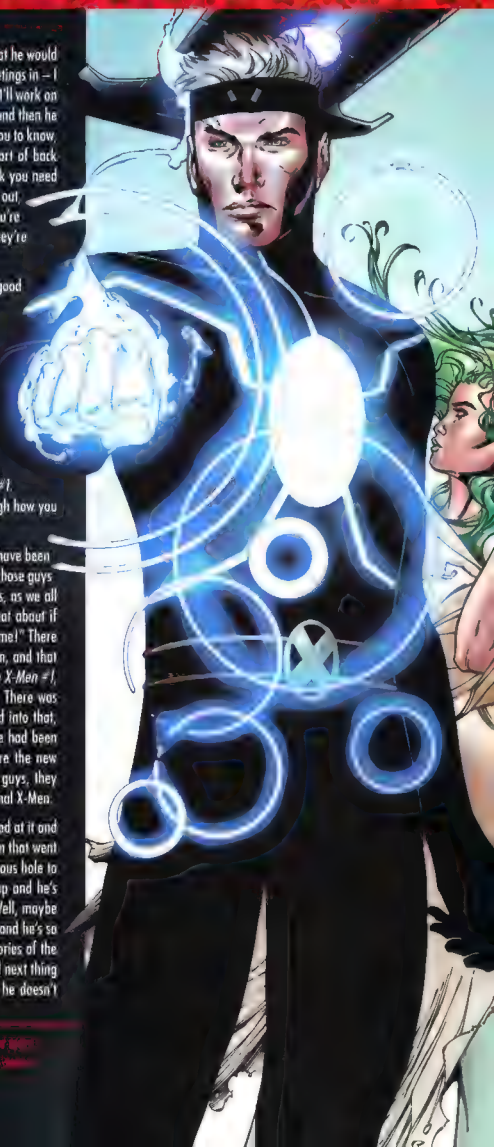
SPOTLIGHT: Wow. He sounds like he'd make a good corner guy!

ED: He's like my Burgess Meredith. *(Laughter.)* And please print that. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Wow…what a great image. *(Laughter.)* Now, the drama behind *Deadly Genesis* was stoked by the revelation that Professor Xavier had sent a team of mutants to defeat Krakoa previous to the All-New, All-Different team that premiered in *Giant-Size X-Men #1*. Was that your concept? And can you walk us through how you put all these variables in place?

ED: No, that wasn't my concept. I think that might have been Axel Alonso. It was him, or Joe, or Brian, or one of those guys … This is what happens at those summit meetings, as we all kick around ideas, and everybody says, "Well, what about if this?" And then people go, "Oh yeah! That's awesome!" There were two or three elements that I was sort of given, and that was the major one. It was gonna tie into *Giant-Size X-Men #1*, because it was the 30th anniversary of that story. There was also gonna be a secret from Xavier's past that tied into that, and the secret was gonna turn out to be that there had been a second team, a previous team of mutants before the new X-Men. Wolverine, Storm, Nightcrawler and those guys, they weren't the first to do a rescue attempt on the original X-Men.

Having gone back and re-reading *Giant-Size*, I looked at it and I was thinking about how there was a previous team that went in to save the X-Men from Krakoa. To me, the obvious hole to fill here is that in *Giant-Size*, Cyclops just wakes up and he's on the Blackbird flying home, and I'm thinking, "Well, maybe he remembered this whole other thing happening, and he's so freaked out about it that Xavier replaces his memories of the horrific event." You know, they all got captured and next thing he knows he's flying on the Blackbird home and he doesn't



TOGETHER AGAIN: Havok and Polaris need each other more than ever, but what direction will their friendship take? Find out in January's *X-Men #25*!

have any memories of what happened and his powers don't work, and I thought, "I've gotta use those two elements to try to make this story work." It really took off, so I took it off from there.

SPOTLIGHT: And that meant coming up with the mythical third Summers brother!

ED: The whole third Summers brother thing came about once I had the gig and I was outlining the whole story. We had some conference calls where the CEO of Marvel and Publisher Dan Buckley and Joe Quesada and my editors and everybody was sitting there, with me basically making my pitch: "Okay, here's the story." And Joe said, "Well, I feel like the bad guy of the story should have more of a connection than just being the only survivor of this team of mutants that disappeared." I agreed; I said it would be nice if there was more of a reason for Xavier to want to erase Scott's memories of this thing other than that it's just horrifying that these people died to free him, and then he goes back and they gather another team and go save him. You know, it'd be nice if there was something more, maybe if there was a way that if he was, like, you know, Scott and Alex's younger brother or something.

Mike Marts said, "Well, since the early '90s there's been this theory going around that there IS a third Summers brother, and it's either Gambit, or it's this Adam-X guy, but nothing's ever been conclusively said that they actually are." And I was like, "Oh, that's awesome, then! Let's have this character be that third Summers brother!" I mulled it for a couple days, and called up Mike Marts and bounced this crazy origin idea off of him to see if it worked.

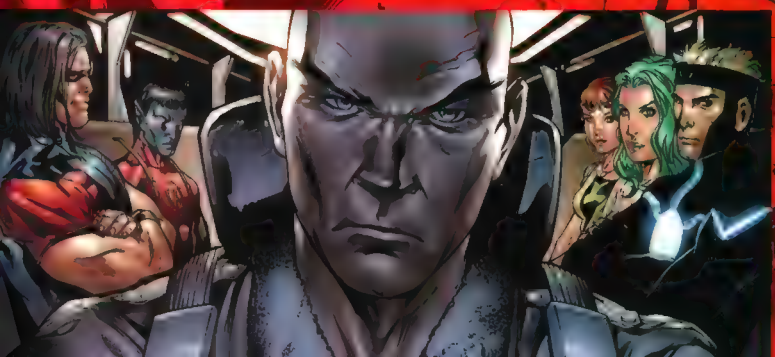
SPOTLIGHT: So the third Summers brother, Gabriel, came into being out of all this thinking. Can you share with us some of the thoughts you had when putting him together as the villain of *Deadly Genesis*?

ED: It ties in very closely to all the backstory that we've learned about their father, Christopher Summers, when he and his wife were kidnapped by the Shi'Ar. I wanted it to add a bit more of an element of tragedy other than his wife simply being killed. I mean, he thinks his kids have been killed on Earth by these aliens, his wife is taken from him when she's carrying another child, and I thought, well, if she's pregnant it'll be even worse! You know, he's seen his other children die, and his wife is captured and she's pregnant and he's gotta get to her and save her

PROFESSOR XAVIER

Charles Xavier's life has been in free fall since M-Day, the day that Wanda Maximoff uttered those three infamous words, "No more mutants." Xavier, the world's most powerful telepath, was among the teeming population of mutants who lost their powers. That he regained the use of his legs was scarce consolation, and he slipped into hiding. It was the horrific events of Deadly Genesis that drew him out of seclusion, however, as a dark secret from his past sought him out for a terrible and righteous retribution. The revelations of that series amounted to nothing less than a betrayal to his surrogate son, Scott Summers, who exiled Xavier from the school he had founded. Now this dark past, in the form of Gabriel Summers, Vulcan, threatens to wipe the table of all that Xavier has left in the world to care about. He forms a team to head into battle against untrammeled vengeance, with the added tension of diplomacy with the Shi'Ar Empire complicating his mission. Whether the X-Men succeeded or failed in the past, the deciding factor was often Xavier's respect as a mentor, his credibility as a leader, and his potent mutant powers. Now, having none of those assets at his command, he heads into outer space....

BILLY ON XAVIER'S VISUAL LOOK: He is tough to draw. I have yet to get the hang of it, and I don't know why. He seems like he is easy to draw; he *should* be easy to draw. He's just a bald guy, but for some reason, I don't know why, I'm still needing some time to get used to him. Maybe since I am the first person to draw him regularly out of his wheelchair, I will use that as an excuse. Nobody has done that before! *(Laughter.)*



THE FINAL SCREAM: One of Vulcan's victims was Banshee, who died in a fiery plane crash in *Deadly Genesis* #3.

before they kill her; so to have her killed in front of him, and have the baby just torn from the womb in front of him, that would just drive him insane, I thought. And then the idea that the baby isn't actually dead, but the Shi'Ar throw it in some kind of an incubator, and in the course of a month or two they raise it to eight years old and send it back to Earth to be a slave .... *(Laughter.)* I was like, that's a pretty messed-up origin. You could really see a villain coming out of that story!

SPOTLIGHT: Well, when you put it that way! *(Laughter.)*

ED: So that was the stuff I really brought to it, and the structure of it and everything. What I found interesting, though, was that I realized that when you're working on something that's not 100% thought out by you, you're always a half step back from it, because not every single element of it was something that you thought of. So that's why I kind of feel a little bit more attached to what I'm doing on *Uncanny X-Men*. I've been rereading the *Deadly Genesis* hardback and I can't believe that we did this thing. I'm like, "Yeah, it really holds together! I'm really proud of this!"

SPOTLIGHT: You should be proud of it. It's already part of the canon of classic X-Men stories, and probably a key part of why you got the job on *Uncanny*, right?

ED: Well, before *Uncanny* came around, I was talking about *Deadly Genesis* with Mike Marts, and he was saying,"Well, if you had one of the regular X-books, what would you do?" And I just said, "Well, I'd do this story about Vulcan going back to get revenge on the Shi'Ar galaxy, and Prof. X puts together a team of X-Men to go try and stop him before he destroys Lilandra and everything that she's tried so hard to build, and I'd bring Rachel, 'cause she's got Shi'Ar issues, and Alex and Lorna, because of their connection to each other and Alex's connection to Vulcan, and also because his dad is out there..." I just sort of outlined it all in one minute, just off the top of my head. *(Laughter.)* And he said, "Okay, well do you want the job then?", and I said, "Yeah I guess so, actually, that sounds like a really fun job!"

This will be a totally different X-book than *X-Men* or *Astonishing X-Men*, and the events will be taking place outside of *Civil War*, so if there are people who have that "crossover malaise," they can still read their *Uncanny X-Men* book without having to worry about how it ties into everything else.

SPOTLIGHT: Another thing you are doing is similar to what the creators of Planet Hulk are doing. You're taking these characters off world for twelve issues, and that's a big commitment, both to the characters and to the creative team.

ED: Well, it's only twelve issues. *(Laughter.)* It's funny, because I say "only;" that's a lot, I guess, but it doesn't seem like that much to me. I'm halfway done with it and I feel like I'm barely fitting everything in. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, the first issue promises a sense of the epic; naturally, it starts with that incredible double-sided cover by Billy Tan, which is pretty much telling you what you have to expect.

ED: Yeah, that was interesting 'cause I was just one day sent the cover, and I was like "oh, this is awesome." *(Laughter.)* But there's been like one or two fans who've actually gone online and complained that the X-Men don't fight the Shi'Ar or the Starjammers in the first issue.

SPOTLIGHT: Well…that's an interesting observation!

ED: Do you really think that after Chris Claremant's last issue, that you should just open up the next issue and this brand-new team of X-Men are in the midst of a fight against the Starjammers and the Shi'Ar? Wouldn't you want to know how they got there? I mean, a lot of stuff happens before they meet up with the Starjammers and Lilandra, and there are a lot of left-turns where people think we're gonna go right. That's always my hope, to do stuff other than what people expect. I mean, one of the most important characters in the whole story we don't even meet until the end of the fourth issue!

SPOTLIGHT: Who? Is it an X-Man?

ED: Ahh, I'm not gonna say, but it's somebody who's gonna be an important character in the story and in the future of the Shi'Ar and X-Universes, really, and has close ties to Rachel and Jean, and the whole history of the Shi'Ar and the Phoenix and everything….

SPOTLIGHT: So it's Wolverine, in other words!

ED: It's Wolverine. The Brood have a cloned Wolverine. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: I knew it! No left turns for me! I've got you figured out!!! (Laughter.)

ED: I almost considered that because I thought, "I should have Wolverine and Warpath fight!" You know, what if there's a Brood Wolverine, but it's something like a Brood egg that died inside Wolverine and he popped it out and it hatched into a duplicate of him?

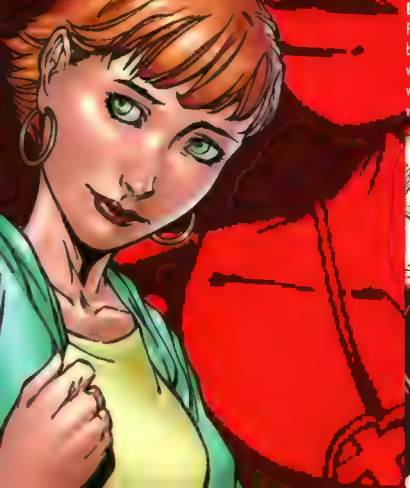
SPOTLIGHT: *(Laughter.)* Ummm…yeah…What if? *(Laughter.)*

ED: Got to find a way to make that work. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, you know, this issue sort of reminds a person who's been with the X-Men since the Claremont era began that there are really two different kinds of X-Men stories. There are the terrestrial mutant activities on Earth, but then there is also this space opera type stuff that they have dabbled in from time to time.

MARVEL GIRL

The daughter of another dimension's Scott Summers and Jean Grey, Rachel Summers has had it rough. In recent days she has been witness to the slaughter of all her relatives from the Grey side of the family, a mass-murder delivered by the hands of the Shi'Ar in their never-ending pursuit to protect against the coming of the Phoenix Force which resides within her genes. Now, Professor Xavier has recruited her and her immense talents of the mind to help stand between Vulcan- the maniacal Summers brother who terrorized her during the events of *Deadly Genesis*- and the destruction of Lilandra's race. But is her eagerness to help Xavier borne of a pursuit for justice, or is she just better positioning herself for vengeance?



ED ON CHARACTERIZATION: She's a character who I always thought was cool. She's an incredibly powerful telekinetic and telepath, and she's called Marvel Girl which is totally cool. Professor X is without his telepathy, and he needs another telepath who he can sort of work with, and because of that she's going to become an even stronger telepath because of this hands-on work she'll doing with Xavier, letting him inside her head. She's going to learn more subtle ways of doing what she does, and basically become a much more powerful telepath than she already is. And you know her history with the Shi'Ar: they wiped out every person that she's genetically related to. She has this great story to make up her character, but I just felt like, here I am twenty years from the time she appeared or more, and she's still doing the same stuff and saying the same stuff. I thought, "Come on, let's use her!"

BILLY ON MARVEL GIRL'S VISUAL LOOK: We are still using the Phoenix force sign that comes over her eye, but I'm changing it a little bit. I want to give the geometric shape a little more organic look. It will seem more like it's alive, with a texture, a floating texture. If you were seeing it for real, it wouldn't be flat, it would seem like it's lightly waving across her eye.

ED: You know, a couple of people have said that the X-Men in space is *not* the X-Men. I think that's ridiculous, because when I was a kid, and I was eight years old buying the Cockrum and Claremont *X-Men*, when they went into space and met the Shi'Ar, and Jean was the Phoenix…that was the X-Men, you know? Just because it's not about them being mutants and being hated by everybody else doesn't mean it's not the X-Men.

SPOTLIGHT: Another way to place the X-Men space stories in their proper context, if you look at a character like Jean Grey and where her character arc as the Phoenix was going, she was a character whose powers simply could not be contained on Earth, you know? To tell good stories about her, you have to place them off world.

ED: Yeah, if not for the Shi'Ar and the outer space angle, those swashbuckling kind of X-stories, there's no death of Phoenix. There's two highlights for any X-fan, that you can always guarantee if they have a top ten list of their favorite X-Men stories, you're always going to get the "The Death of Phoenix" and you're always gonna get "Days of Future Past," and if not for the outer space X-Men, you don't get the "Death of Phoenix," and you probably you don't end up getting "Days of Future Past" if you don't have the death of Phoenix.

SPOTLIGHT: Right on! And also in my top five list would be the Brood Saga, which also took part in outer space.

ED: Yeah, the Brood Saga, people love that. Yeah, at that point I think I had just about given up on the book as a teenager, just because I was…

SPOTLIGHT: Too bad for you. You missed out! *(Laughter.)*

ED: No, but I read X-Men then, and I really like it still.

SPOTLIGHT: In talking about writing X-Men, you mentioned that you read the first hundred Claremont issues, and I remember you said something about reading all the Captain America issues twice. You take getting to know your characters and their histories seriously.

ED: There's probably, like, fifty issues of Cap I haven't read. There's a gap that I couldn't really get between where Essential Captain America Vol. 2 ends and the first Englehart stuff starts. I've read some of those, but there's about a twenty-something-issue gap for me, and I've also missed some of the stuff toward the end of the Gruenwald run. I gave up around Cap-Wolf.

SPOTLIGHT: What about X-Men? How well read are you?

ED: It's impossible. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, of course.

ED: You just can't get 'em all. But I read lots. I read hundreds and hundreds of comics. I read almost every issue of X-Force, just to catch up on Warpath. I read a LOT of stuff, more stuff than I probably should have, in a way. I read as much of the stuff that's reprinted that I was told by fans and by editors that was really important for me to read. I read the entire Morrison run, which our story takes off from to some degree because of what Morrison did with the Shi'Ar and Lilandra and Cassandra Nova, and all that stuff is very important to what goes on in our story.

SPOTLIGHT: Now, what about working with Billy Tan? He's not the typical artist you work with.

ED: No, he's much more from that Top Cow school, you can see a little Jim Lee influence in his stuff. But, you know, the *X-Men* isn't the same kind of book I usually do, either. I mean, you could see Billy Tan drawing the *Authority*, and I did that.

SPOTLIGHT: How did it come to be that you would figure out that Billy was a strong candidate for the new series?

MARVEL GIRL AND PSYLOCKE: This great figure composition is from Billy Tan's first run on Uncanny X-Men, available in the *End of Greys TPB*.

ED: I was sitting in Mike Marts' office last September and I went into the office for a day, and we were talking about artists that could be my artist on *Uncanny*, and I looked up at the wall and there were some pages — his first three or four pages from the three-issue fill-in he did with Claremont. I pulled those down off the wall and I was flipping through the Xeroxes of the pencils and I said, "Who's this guy? This guy's really great!" Marts said "Oh, that's Billy Tan." I was like, "Can I get this guy?" He's got this amazing attention to detail, and his action scenes are just insane, and after the first couple issues, I sort of learned how to write the comic for him more, and as much as I like his first two issues, after everything I've seen from his third issue so far, he's just blown the first two issues way out of the water. I've really learned to sort of break up the talking scenes and the action scenes, and make sure that there's something on every page that's a little bit more dynamic than people talking, because that's where he really explodes- when you give him that crazy dynamic stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: He can really set up an action scene with his gift for picking the right perspectives, and his visceral action drawings.

ED: Yeah, that scene when Warpath leaps off the roof and then attacks those mech-soldiers? I was just, like, "Whoa! Okay, we're on!" I think he's really stepped up to the plate, and conveniently we had enough lead time that he's got time to do it, and we're alternating every third issue with a different artist.

SPOTLIGHT: Who's the fill-in artist?

ED: Clay Henry is doing the third, sixth and ninth issues, and those are the Vulcan-centric issues. Great job from Clay as well.

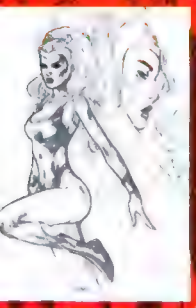
SPOTLIGHT: Oh yeah?

POLARIS AND HAVOK

After the events of "Blood of the Apocalypse," Lorna Dane has never been at a lower point than she is now...and that's saying something for one who has been with the X-Men as long as she has! She lost her powers in the aftermath of M-Day, and reflexively accepted Apocalypse's offer to become his horseman named Pestilence. After his

[illegible] one that manifests itself in an urge to flee from everything

[illegible] from herself. Desperate and on the run, the X-Men find her hiding in the side streets of Egypt and offer her a way out, a choice that may lead



And who is there to offer her that initial helping hand? That would be her erstwhile lover, Alex Summers, who has gone through some recent traits of his own, the most notable being that a brother he never knew existed has awakened from a death state and is now on a course for revenge that risks tearing the universe apart! In such dire times as these, Havok can't still find a place in his mind and his heart to reach out to Lorna, the woman who has twisted his heart [illegible] knots before. Can he forge new bonds with her on this mission, proving that there is still a spark of love between them, or will the risk of failure once again undermine all that they are striving for?

ED ON CHARACTERIZATION: There's this tragedy to both of them. Polaris and Havok have been [illegible] around the same time, and they have this tangled up romance in the past. Havok has this incredible connection to this story, and Lorna has just gone through all this terrible stuff. I thought: Why wouldn't she leave Earth, if she could? *(Laughter.)* You know? It's like, if everything you've gone through is all this awful stuff and you're at this turning point in your life, why not go with your ex-boyfriend and help him try to stop his family from going nuts against the Shi'ar? They have a really big part to play in the grand finale of the story. Their status quo is gonna be altered more than almost anybody in the whole book.

One of the things I've read while getting ready for all this stuff was the *Neal Adams Visionaries* collection. I just love the way Polaris and [illegible]

Havok back to somewhere in between his current look and his original look, with the all-black, body-stocking kind of look. I always thought that was just so cool. You've gotta give props to Neal Adams for all those costumes; that's why I had Billy bring Polaris' outfit closer to the original Neal Adams costume, too.

BILLY ON THEIR VISUAL LOOK: Obviously, I don't know too much about her, but one thing I do know: She has green hair! *(Laughter.)* I pulled together a lot of her reference, and she looked very different from artist to artist, so there wasn't just one thing I could base her look on. Ed came in and said, do the Neal Adams costume; he said make a sexier version of that costume. I think you will probably see a different way of projecting her powers, her magnetic fields. I read a little bit about her magnetic powers, and when I was drawing her jumping across the building in the first issue, I wanted to make sure to figure out what her powers would look like.

Ed was saying that Havok was a little too "military looking" lately. He wanted him to go back to the old version, and that's pretty much what I did. I use a little different design on his chest, the way his powers look when he's using them. The "egg beater" head: I don't think it's going to work here. *(Laughter.)*

Character sketches of Polaris and Havok by Billy Tan.

SWAY: Ed created the tragic heroine Sway along with three other mutants (Vulcan, Darwin and Petra) in *Deadly Genesis*.

ED: Yeah, he's really kickin' butt. Especially once Vulcan starts encountering the Shi'Ar and really messing things up, he's just exploding on that stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: So Clay Henry will be doing the sub-plot issues of Uncanny involving Vulcan, but Billy will be doing the main X-Men stories, and then finishing up the storyline with the climactic three issues?

ED: Yeah, that's right. And about three weeks ago or so I got the first four pages from Billy's third issue. He's getting better at the stuff that I was worried about with him, you know, like, the people walking around and talking stuff. He's gotten even better at that stuff, and his attention to detail and composition is just getting even better, so I've been really happy with him. I think he's doing a great job, and the stuff that he's gonna have to draw in the last three issues is gonna just probably kill him, or whatever.

SPOTLIGHT: Kill him or whatever?

ED: I mean, there's other guys. There's other guys that used to work at Top Cow. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Artists are expendable, but comics are forever. Right?

ED: Yeah, I can always get that Marc Silvestri guy. Yeah, or Jim Lee. I'll get Jim Lee to come back to the *X-Men*. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Well, it sounds like they'd want to be along for the ride at the climax of this story, but you can keep those guys….Billy Tan is knocking home runs out of the park with his run on *Uncanny X-Men*.

BILLY TAN ON UNCANNY X-MEN

After wrapping up with Ed, we turned to ace artist Billy Tan to get his take on working with Ed and the stable of X-Men characters. We did not let on that Ed intended to kill him with his last three issues of *Uncanny*…

SPOTLIGHT: I happen to like quite a bit of the work you had done in *Uncanny X-Men #469-471*, your first attempt at the X-Men, but I know that you can be critical about your work, which is actually a good thing, in my mind. Do you have any reservations about drawing a team comic book, because there are so many characters, so many costumes, so many details that you have to get right?

BILLY: Well, you just go with reference and let that guide you. For X-Men, I have the *X-Men Encyclopedia*, and I use that as reference, and sometimes if I need a reference, I just contact editor Sean Ryan and he sends them to me.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the things that I like about your work is the energy you bring with the perspectives you draw from. You seem to draw employing many degrees of perspective and it really adds to the variety of the layouts you produce.

BILLY: I don't know, it's hard to look at my stuff and say it's pretty cool. I can't do it. I can't look at my own stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: So you feel like you're just a lucky guy who's getting by?

BILLY: I really do. I really do. There are so many artists that I can't even mention that are so much more deserving than me. It's beyond my dreams. In none of my dreams did I ever think I would be drawing X-Men.

SPOTLIGHT: I know you said that you were first attracted to X-Men when they were being drawn by Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, and Marc Silvestri, but have you read those stories lately?

BILLY: Not really, not too much. I don't really know too much about their backgrounds, their characters. But in a way, I think maybe that's good, because they seem like new characters to me. Especially characters like Polaris, Warpath…They have a new costume, and I don't have to look at what they did in the past, or how they are supposed to react. She's got new powers, and he's not been around for a while, and it's almost like I'm playing with a new character. And that's fine. It feels almost like I'm creating them from the start. If I was to draw Wolverine, he's been drawn in every pose imaginable. It's going to be hard for me to do, to bring something new. But for me with this Uncanny X-Men, for me, it's new and fresh. Everything is fresh: the action, the motion…everything!

SPOTLIGHT: I was talking to Ed Brubaker about Warpath, and he said that it he often gets inspiration for the ways he wants to write his characters from your drawings of them.

BILLY: He's too kind!

SPOTLIGHT: For instance, the sequence where Warpath is leaping down through the bazaar in Cairo, chasing down Polaris, it was inspiring to him when it came to writing Warpath.

BILLY: Yeah, one time, he said, "I can't wait for the Warpath mini-series!" And I said, "What Warpath mini?"

SPOTLIGHT: And he said, "The one I'm going to draw and the one you're going to write!" *(Laughter.)*

BILLY: Yeah, I said, "What are you talking about?" *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: The creative team that is doing the twelve issue run on *Uncanny X-Men* that is subtitled "The Rise and Fall of the Shi'Ar Empire" is remaining consistent throughout: Ed is writing them all, and you are drawing nine of the issues, while Clay Henry is doing three issues that relate to a subplot featuring Vulcan. Are the two of you coordinating with each other on any visual consistency?

BILLY: His is a separate story. I have seen his work and it's cool. It looks different, but that's okay because it's telling a different section of the story.

SPOTLIGHT: What's your impression of working with Ed Brubaker?

BILLY: I just met him through working with him. It's a plus working on his stuff. He's an amazing writer. He's a really versatile writer. He can write crime, he can write super-hero books, a single super-hero book or a group super-hero book.

SPOTLIGHT: You aren't the typical artist he works with. Generally he works with a different style of artist, especially on his crime books, so for him this is a brand new experience, too. In talking to him, I've found that he is really enjoying your work.

BILLY: Thank you, Ed! He is being very supportive with me. He is putting a lot of faith in me, and I really appreciate that, how he gave me a chance to do this. With his status, he could have chosen any artist he wanted. There are so many great artists to choose and he chose me.

SPOTLIGHT: He mentioned that he was sitting with his editors in New York, talking with them about who would draw the book. They were going over a few ideas when he saw some of your work from issues #269-271 with Chris Claremont hanging on the wall, and he said, "Well, is this guy busy?" And they said, "Hmmmm…let's check!" And it was all based on that material that you don't like, so it must be better than you think! *(Laughter.)*

BILLY: I heard that, and it's great. I'm so lucky, and I'm more than grateful.

SPOTLIGHT: How did you get hooked up with the three issues of Chris Claremont's *Uncanny X-Men* to begin with?

NIGHTCRAWLER

Even though he's a guy who has built his life around seeking adventure, it's easy to say that being an X-Man has been the biggest adventure of all for Kurt Wagner. A one-time circus performer, a gypsy and an advocate of all that is swinging-ass, the bond that exists between Kurt's identity and his status as an X-Man originates in one place: his loyalty to Charles Xavier. For Kurt, there is one [illegible] he is X-Man at the right now, and that is his mentor who saved him from a life of being hunted, chased, and eventually killed in the remote mountain communities of Bavaria. And it is this loyalty that Xavier will be depending on more than ever in a mission that will test the X-Men to their limits.

ED ON CHARACTERIZATION: There's a bit of a crass commerciality to his inclusion, in that you can't do an X-Men book without having at least one of the popular "All-New All-Different" X-Men. So when I was looking at Nightcrawler, I already thought he was really cool, and there's also this whole swashbuckling element to him. I also like the idea of someone who's as spiritual as he is being taken into outer space: it's a really interesting thing, because you get to see this guy sort of seeing the wonders of the universe that his God may or may not have created. I also like the idea of Nightcrawler being the leader of a team, and that was one of the things that they were doing in *Uncanny* that I thought was really cool, having him sort of come into his own that way. Finally, there's gotta be one person that's just there because they're not ever going to say no to Professor X…and I like Nightcrawler being that guy.

BILLY ON NIGHTCRAWLERS' VISUAL LOOK: He's always cool to draw. I drew him many times before with the Chris Claremont run (*Uncanny X-Men* #269-271.) He's crawling around, all creepy, sort of like Spider-Man. You're going to see a lot more dynamic motion, a lot more Spider-Man style crawling motion. His tail has to go somewhere, too!

BILLY: CB Cebulski emailed me to see if I would do three issues of it for editor Michael Marts, but it wasn't supposed to be more than that. I said, "Yeah, why not?"

SPOTLIGHT: And what were you thinking of doing at that period of time? Did you have any plans to continue doing something for Marvel?

BILLY: No, I had no idea. I think I was kind of waiting for another *X-23* series to start. Craig and Chris were writing it, and they were supposed to have a script for me, and I had done the first cover for it, so I was actually expecting that to come together. Then the *X-Men* came along. CB called me, Mike Marts, I think even Chris Claremont were all on the speaker phone together. They caught me off guard. I didn't know they were going to give me the *X-Men* book. It didn't sink in to me. It was funny, I asked them, "Chris Claremont was on the phone? He didn't say a word!" *(Laughter.)* I guess he was just listening to see if I would take on the project, but there was no way I was going to turn it down.

After the third issued ended, Michael Marts said they were going to make me an offer, and I didn't know what that was. He didn't tell me. Well, it turned into the series with Ed. I couldn't believe it.

SPOTLIGHT: This is pretty huge, man. "The Rise and Fall of the Shi'Ar Empire" is a twelve-issue series, a story featuring the X-Men in outer space that lots of X-Men fans have been waiting a long time for. Have you done any outer space comics, featuring spaceships, other planets, alien landscapes and all that, or is this type of art new to you?

BILLY: Actually, back in 1996 I did the *X-Men/Star Trek* crossover. I did about four or five pages of that. Yeah, and don't print any of that! *(Laughter.)* In a way, I think doing outer space stuff is easier, because it's all make-believe. Like, if you want to draw action in a city, with all the buildings and cars, you have to make it all look realistic. They have to look like buildings, like cars, the perspective has to be realistic. But in space, especially now with the third issue of Uncanny which is dealing with the space ship, I just make stuff up! Nothing has to be really realistic. So in a good way, it's really easy.

SPOTLIGHT: So you're having a lot of fun with this, just letting it loose?

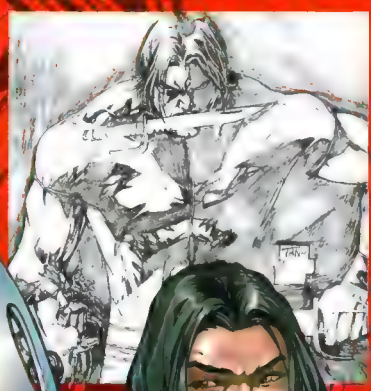
BILLY: Exactly! The hardest part, though, was drawing the Shi'Ar space ship. That is a pain to draw!

SPOTLIGHT: Do you have a reference drawing that you can use to get all the different angles of the ship, how it will look?

BILLY: It's got all those weird shapes. It's a little too much. *(Laughter.)*

Here's what is NOT a little too much: Ed Brubaker, Billy Tan and Clay Henry will be bringing us twelve issues of "The Rise and Fall of the Shi'Ar Empire," from Uncanny X-Men *#475-486, and by the end of it, I'm sure we'll be wanting more! Thanks to Ed and Billy for taking us inside the making of* Uncanny X-Men*!*

WARPATH



The late John Proudstar–the original Thunderbird–was on the scene when the original X-Men were rescued from Krakoa, and died on their next mission against Count Nefaria. His younger brother James Proudstar is only too familiar with the emotions of hatred that fester inside Scott Summers towards Xavier. He's felt them, too, for he once blamed the professor for the death of his brother. This enmity was responsible for his emergence as Warpath with the Hellions, and ironically, it is this hatred that part of the reason why Xavier is so interested in him for this mission. Though Xavier's intentions are inscrutable for now, one thing is clear: Warpath is recruited to be the muscle in the group. Now armed with knives forged of Wakandan vibranium, and with reflexes and agility nearly on a par with Slightcrawler, Warpath is poised to step into the limelight on his biggest stage of all. But lingering hatred has a way of humbling even the most powerful.

ED ON CHARACTERIZATION: He sort of mirrors Vulcan, in a way. At one time, he hated Prof. X. He wanted to kill him when he was working with the Hellions. They kidnapped Prof. X, and all for revenge for his brother's death. So he's got this sort of emotional connection to Vulcan's character arc, and I really liked that. And I also thought, when you're gonna do an X-Men book and you're putting together your team, one of them has to be somebody who pretty much just kicks butt. You need to have somebody who is hands-on. Plus, there is the connection to his brother and *Giant-Size X-Men #1*.

BILLY ON WARPATH'S VISUAL LOOK: Drawing Warpath, I see that he is very energetic. He is all about power. He is like Wolverine except with a different fighting style, different looks and shapes. He uses knives. To me, he seems like a new character. I don't look at the old versions to see how he should act. I just drew him based on Ed's plot. For this book, I am definitely keeping him more realistic, not exaggerating too much. We talked about how he used to be regarded as something like seven feet tall, but we didn't want him to be that big. That's huge! We made him six feet something.

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

BILLY TAN • OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

REAL NAME: Billy Tan
DATE OF BIRTH: August 13, 1970
PLACE OF BIRTH: Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia
OCCUPATION: Comic book artist
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Round Rock, TX
WEBSITE: www.billytanart.com
FIRST COMICS APPEARANCE: *Codename: Stryke Force*, Image Comics
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE: *X-23 #1, 2005*

HISTORY: When you're a kid growing up in Malaysia, neither Spider-Man or Wolverine are jumping out at you from the comic shelves; it's the Chinese comics and manga that are omnipresent on the comic art scene. Boys and girls of all ages in Malaysia voraciously read that material, so it takes a lot for the American-style super-hero comics that Billy now draws for Marvel to make it through. It would take a long time before Billy would be inspired to want to draw American comics, but it wouldn't take a long time for the kid to realize he wanted to be an artist!

Perhaps his first actual dabbling in the creative arts was decorating the floor of his father's hardware shop with drawings in chalk. Any customer who wanted to buy some tools or carpentry supplies might have to step around an elaborate drawing of an elephant or a monkey, and that's just the way the creative Billy liked it! Billy was one among seven kids in the Tan family, and he got support for his creative endeavors from all sides. His father's hobbies included writing in Chinese calligraphy and drawing, and his siblings also whiled away free time in drawing and painting. Billy fit right in. (In fact, his sister helped him ink a graphic novel, and his younger brother Michael has begun to work with Top Cow!)

After he graduated from Han Jiang High School, he left for America to study at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. Despite his love for art, he found himself pursuing a degree in business. All this time, though, he was working on his skills at pencil art and drawing, and when he saw what was happening at Image Comics – with the artists like Marc Silvestri and Jim Lee – he decided he wanted to try to become a comic artist. He developed a portfolio of material and set out to conquer the world. His first stop was Marvel Comics, who did everything but kick the poor kid out of the office: not only was Billy's talent raw, but he didn't understand the protocols of getting a proper inspection of his portfolio!

It was Top Cow, though — the home of his comic artist idol, Marc Silvestri– that actually took a look at his portfolio through a program they had developed to seek out new talent. Billy's work was raw, yes, but Top Cow offered Billy several suggestions on how to improve his craft, and after Billy showed them that he would listen to and incorporate their advice into his work, he was hired on to work with the studio. This started an association with Top Cow that would last for nearly a decade.

Over that time, Billy would find success drawing *Cyberforce* and *Codename: Stryke Force*, as well as *Witchblade Obakemono*, a graphic novel in collaboration with Fiona Avery. He also snuck in a bit of work in the *Star Trek/X-Men* one-shot published by Marvel! But by 2004, Billy's career was in a small slump, brought on by the obligations of caring for his newborn son. But just because Billy thought he might be stalled for future projects didn't mean that other companies weren't keeping his memorable work in mind. Marvel Comics approached Billy to come on board and draw for the House of Ideas, and all of a sudden, Billy was back behind the drawing boards in full force!

In fact, his first work at Marvel had him drawing both *X-23* and *Marvel Knights Spider-Man* during a concurrent period of time! *X-23* in particular was a smash hit, and Billy's depiction of the claw-baring teenager had fandom taking notice! After these two series wound up, Billy settled into a three-issue run as interim artist for Chris Claremont's *Uncanny X-Men*. At the time, he had no idea that this brief run was setting him up to become the long-term artist only four issues later! Writer Ed Brubaker was casting around for the perfect fit to draw his high-octane, *Uncanny X-Men* space adventure, and when he saw Billy's art, that was all it took. The old X-Men artist is the new X-Men artist, and *Uncanny X-Men* fans are the beneficiaries! Will he stay on *Uncanny X-Men* after the Shi'Ar storyline is complete? Nobody knows, but one thing is guaranteed: this humble guy from Malaysia has come a long, long way to make it to Marvel, and Marvel fans want to keep him!

THE BILLY TAN MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:
Marvel Knights Spider-Man #13-18 (2005)
Marvel Spotlight: Ed Brubaker/Billy Tan (2006)
Star Trek/X-Men #1 (1995)
Uncanny X-Men #469-470, 475-up (2006)
X-23 #1-6 (2005)

BILLY TAN COVERS:
Supreme Power: Hyperion #3

COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:
Marvel Knights Spider-Man Vol. 4: Wild Blue Yonder TPB
NYX/X-23 HC
Uncanny X-Men—The New Age Vol. 4: End of Greys TPB
X-23: Innocence Lost TPB

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH BILLY TAN

With *Uncanny X-Men* likely to break him out as a major star in the world of comic art, now is a great time to cover Billy Tan. *Spotlight* had the great fun of conducting a one-on-one interview with Billy in the midst of the loud din of the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con, where we talked about his work on *Uncanny X-Men* (as you already know if you've read the special section on *iIXM*), *Marvel Knights Spider-Man*, *X-23* and how Billy has developed his exciting and dynamic art style! Our interview started with Billy poring through a back issue of *Marvel Spotlight* which covered *Daredevil* artist Michael Lark! His eyes stopped on the page in which Michael showed off pictures of his home art studio.

BILLY: *(Pointing at the comic.)* Oh, look, I have the same scanner as Michael Lark! That thing cost over a thousand bucks! I bought mine refurbished off ebay.

SPOTLIGHT: Michael actually traded some of his original art to an art collector that had an extra scanner on hand. Have you ever taken advantage of the fact that you're an artist to try and trade art for things you might want?

BILLY: No, I don't do that. I just go on ebay if I want something. You can get good prices on refurbished materials.

SPOTLIGHT: This first issue of *Uncanny X-Men* that you and Ed have done is amazing. The story picks up right after Ed's *Deadly Genesis*, which is a pretty huge event in X-Men history, and Ed's story and your pencils really add to the excitement of the whole event.

BILLY: Cool. . .thanks! I haven't even looked at it yet.

SPOTLIGHT: You haven't?

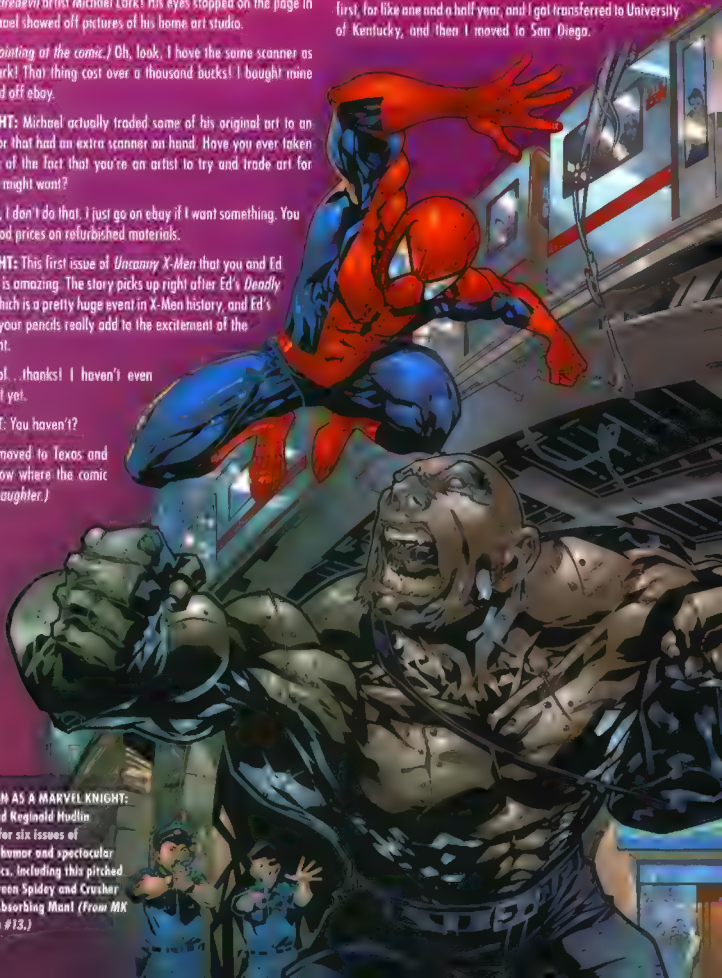
BILLY: I moved to Texas and I don't know where the comic store is! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Where in Texas?

BILLY: Round Rock. My wife got transferred in her job. We've been there three weeks, and it's hot!

SPOTLIGHT: Where have you lived before that?

BILLY: Torrance, California, and I lived there from 1996. I got hired by Top Cow in 1994, and a year later we moved to Los Angeles. I went to school here in the US at University of Kentucky, but I was in Kansas, first, for like one and a half year, and I got transferred to University of Kentucky, and then I moved to San Diego.



SPIDER-MAN AS A MARVEL KNIGHT: Billy Tan and Reginald Hudlin teamed up for six issues of high-flying humor and spectacular super-heroics, including this pitched battle between Spidey and Crusher Creel, the Absorbing Man! *(From MK Spider-Man #13.)*

SPOTLIGHT: So you've been all over the United States. You weren't born here, but how long did you live in Malaysia?

BILLY: Until I was eighteen.

SPOTLIGHT: So all your formative years were spent in Malaysia, but since then you've been in the US. How do you like living in this country?

BILLY: I love it. Each year, it becomes easier. You just need to adjust, once you adjust it becomes easier to appreciate things.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you still have family in Malaysia?

BILLY: Yes, most of my family still live in Malaysia, but I have a couple of sisters that work here in the US. I don't get to go back and visit as much as I would like to, maybe once every two years.

SPOTLIGHT: When did you start to read comics, or did you ever read comics as a kid?

BILLY: I read the Hong Kong comics; after one issue you just want to read another. It's pretty amazing, they come out every two weeks. Here, you get comics once a month. I saw a couple American comic books here and there in Malaysia, but I wasn't really into them. I didn't read them because I couldn't understand them. I just looked at the pictures. Back then, I didn't understand them, but it's not until after I graduated from the University of Kentucky that I started reading American comics, right when Image first started up and they were getting really huge. They were the first to use Photoshop to color, it was amazing. That's when I first took serious notice. I checked out some of the X-Men at the time, too: all the runs by Jim Lee, Kubert, Whilce Portacio. Those were all so fantastic, but it was when Marc Silvestri's *CyberForce* came out that I said, "Oh, man, I have got to get into this."

That is when I was serious about putting together a portfolio. Actually, Marvel was the first company I approached, back around 1993 or 1994.

SPOTLIGHT: Oh, really? How did you do that?

BILLY: They had a class through University of Kentucky to visit New York, to visit museums and art galleries. I thought that would be a great opportunity to try it out. So I knocked on Marvel's door without any appointment whatsoever. Bad, bad, bad move! *(Laughter.)*

LOOK OUT FOR THE CLAWS! Spider-Man gets tagged by Wolverine's adamantium claws as his New Avengers teammates look on! *(From MK Spider-Man #13.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Do you remember who you met?

BILLY: There was a nice lady who was a secretary, she said she would pass on my artwork but there was no way anybody would see me. I was very persistent. I just stood there and asked her, "Are you sure there is nobody that can see me?" Then one of the editors came out – I don't remember who it was – and he rushed up to me and said, "You don't believe her? You don't believe her? I can't look at your artwork!!!" And I felt really bad. I had no clue whatsoever how to do anything back then.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, you were just a young guy back then.

BILLY: Yeah. Well, nice try, right? But Marvel was the first one I tried to get work with. And then I went to Valiant, and they were pretty nice. They looked at my portfolio and gave me some pointers. But I broke in with Top Cow in one of their talent searches. I sent in a couple samples from my portfolio, they sent it back and suggested some changes, told me to do that and send it back. And that's how I broke in.

SPOTLIGHT: At the time, you were familiar with many of the artists at Top Cow, especially Marc Silvestri…

BILLY: Oh yes, he was my idol!

SPOTLIGHT: How long a period was it after they looked at your stuff before you were hired on to start working for them?

BILLY: It was probably two or three months.

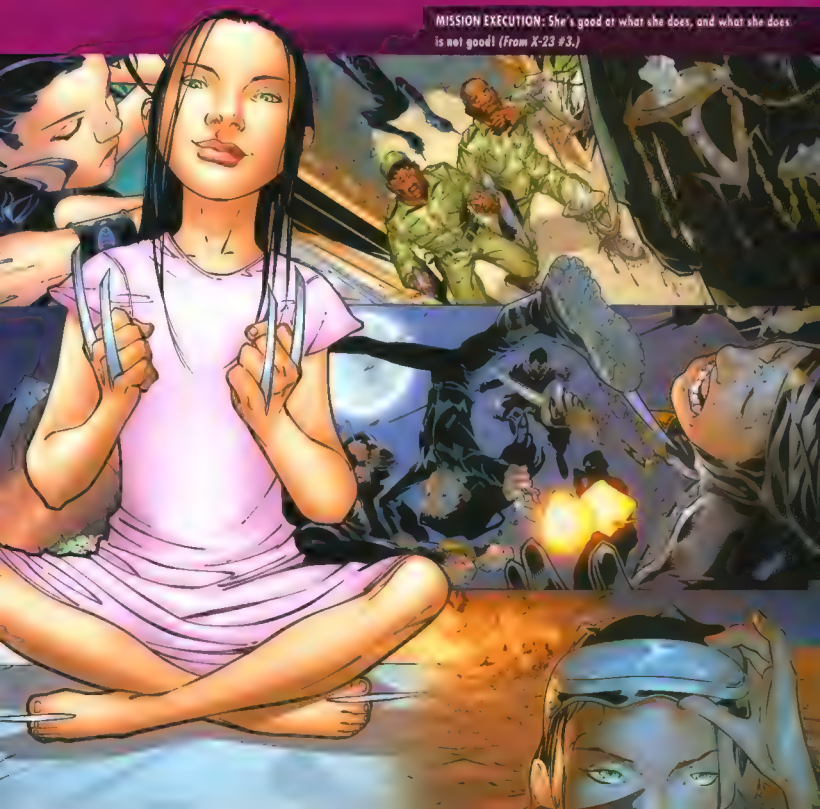
SPOTLIGHT: Were you pretty excited at the time?

BILLY: I was. I couldn't believe it. Especially when I first arrived at Image, all the artists that were there: Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Scott Williams, Marc Silvestri, Travis Charest, all those high profile artists were there. I would just hide in my little corner, say, "Oh my goodness! What am I doing here?" It was amazing.

SPOTLIGHT: That was in San Diego? They brought you out there, put you up in your own studio room?

BILLY: Yes, I kind of moved into a room by myself. I was a little overwhelmed, a little scared. It was a trial basis: if it worked, they would keep me. If it didn't work, they wouldn't keep me.

SPOTLIGHT: When we talked to David Finch for his Marvel Spotlight profile, he went through the same process at Image. He also mentioned that he looks back on his early days and thinks his work is so bad compared to what he would start to do later. I am guessing you feel similarly about your work?



MISSION EXECUTION: She's good at what she does, and what she does is not good! *(From X-23 #3.)*

BILLY: I would like to burn it.

SPOTLIGHT: You'd like to *burn* it?

BILLY: Yes! *(Laughter.)* Or hide it somewhere. And you don't have to look so far. I am looking at this *Uncanny X-Men #475*, and even there, there are things I don't like. Even now, I look at this issue and I say, "Ohhhh. . ." Of course, everybody improves. . . .

SPOTLIGHT: So you are a perfectionist?

BILLY: I like to think so. But every man has his limits. One thing is, I always try my best.

SPOTLIGHT: What kind of art styles were you exposed to in Malaysia that helped develop your art style?

BILLY: Definitely the Hong Kong comics. That's really big over there. Everybody is reading them. It's very intricate, the linework is very detailed, the storytelling . . guys and girls, everybody is reading it. That was the only thing in comics that I was exposed to, pretty much, so I was heavily influenced by it.

SPOTLIGHT: Is that material in the Hong Kong comics like manga?

BILLY: Oh no, it's not manga. It's different from manga. It's Asian, it's more like the Chinese culture's comic book. Hong Kong comics are slightly more realistic than manga. Manga can be cartoony in their own way.

SPOTLIGHT: In Hong Kong, what impresses me most about their comics reading culture is that over there they have reading libraries, full of manga. You can walk in there and pay a small fee and just sit in a comfortable chair and read manga all day.

BILLY: They do that here, too, in Chinatown.

SPOTLIGHT: So you worked with Top Cow for many years. What were some of your achievements with them that you feel really proud of at this time?

BILLY: I did so many books there, some of them I'm okay with, like *Witchblade Obakemono*, a graphic novel I did with Fiona Avery. That's one of the very few books that I'm kind of proud of with Top Cow.

SPOTLIGHT: When did you decide you wanted to make a move to Marvel?

BILLY: Back then, I was finishing up a painted book for Top Cow, done in watercolor, called *Tomb Raider: Arabian Nights*. I had just had my son, so I was taking care of him as well as trying to work, so I wasn't really productive at that time. It took me a while to finish up that painted book — one year, one and a half years. After that, there weren't too many projects coming my way. Then a friend told me that Marvel was trying to contact me. I had always wanted to do stuff with Marvel, but it had just never really came my way.

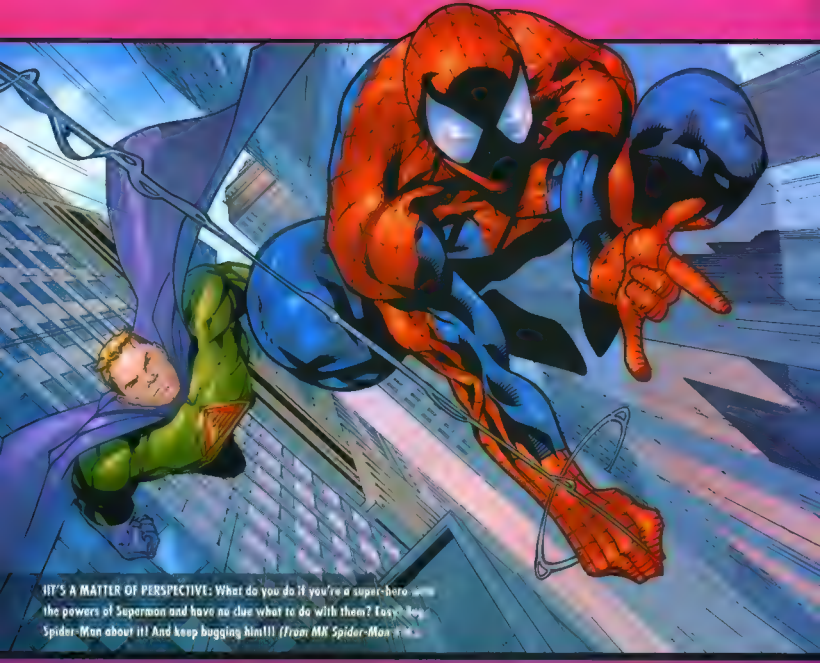
SPOTLIGHT: While you weren't being productive and you hadn't heard of any other projects coming your way, were you concerned that maybe your career was going nowhere and that you might not get any good work to keep it going?

BILLY: Yes, yes. . . I was. I was trying to do my own creator-owned project, but like I said, my friend told me Marvel was trying to contact me. I emailed CB Cebulski at Marvel, and they were cool. They emailed me back the same day! I was really excited.

SPOTLIGHT: Your work has a real energy, a real vibrancy to it.

BILLY: *Uncanny X-Men* is one of the things that makes me the happiest that I've done with Marvel.

BILLY TAN'S SPIDER-MAN! Another fantastic scene of carnage when Absorbing Man chases down Spidey! *(From MK Spider-Man #1.)*



IT'S A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE: What do you do if you're a super-hero with the powers of Superman and have no clue what to do with them? Easy: Tell Spider-Man about it! And keep bugging him!!! *(From MK Spider-Man #1)*

X-23 AND SPIDER-MAN

SPOTLIGHT: Let's talk about *X-23*. That was the first title you worked on at Marvel that was all yours. When she premiered in the pages of *NYX*, became an instant hit as a character,

BILLY: Josh Middleton, he did such a great design on that character in *NYX*.

SPOTLIGHT: What was your take on drawing *X-23*? She was a very young girl in a very violent, dark comic.

BILLY: She was thirteen years old, that was very different. She didn't talk too much, and that makes things very different for an artist. You have to rely on expression to communicate, to convey the message.

SPOTLIGHT: Yes, her dialogue in *X-23* was very limited; you could probably fit it all on one page! Some artists are really good at dynamic layouts or showing off intricate and detailed linework in their drawings, but perhaps they might not draw facial expression very well. For *X-23*, it was vital that you explore facial expression and body expression to tell the story accurately.

BILLY: That's one of the challenges to do *X-23*. Craig and Chris, the writers and creators, they had the descriptions and the good dialogue for it. That's why I like to draw from full scripts, that way I can match the expression with the dialogue when they're talking, to make sure they fit. It was definitely a challenge, and it really helped me to become more skillful in drawing expression on character features.

SPOTLIGHT: The one sequence that really stands out to me is when you show *X-23* going on her assassination missions, the double page spread that show all the different environments in which she is having to kill. How did you feel about drawing those very violent scenes where she was doing it so casually and indifferently, as if it was no big deal?

BILLY: There were a couple things there, for example, the scene where she went in and killed all the people along with that Senator, and there were like two kids in there, and they were supposed to all be dead. I don't think I put a child on the splash page…it was very hard.

SPOTLIGHT: You felt a little uncomfortable doing that?

BILLY: *(Laughter.)* Maybe just a little, especially for drawing a thirteen year old little girl who would do something like that. But she's been through a lot, you know?

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, she was designed to do that.

BILLY: She's a killing machine. I'm a vegetarian myself. (Laughter.) Actually, there was one scene where she planted some bombs in many different places. In the script, one of the bombs was supposed to be planted on an aquarium. I said, "Oh noooo! It's going to kill all the fish!" So instead of doing that, I put the bomb inside some kind of radio or something. I kind of tweaked it. Killing people is okay, but killing animals is a no no!!! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Killing zombies and robots is even better, so maybe one day you'll get one of those kinds of books!

BILLY: I don't know, I'm just really sensitive to animals.

SPOTLIGHT: That's a good thing! No shame in that. But when you find

something difficult in the scripts you're supposed to draw, something you might feel uncomfortable doing, do you talk to your writers about that and say, "Can we do this a little differently?"

BILLY: I was having a tough time in one scene in *Marvel Knights Spider-Man*, where Absorbing Man was using the drugs. I didn't say anything too much, but I was having a little trouble with him using the drugs.

SPOTLIGHT: That was the scene when the Absorbing Man actually absorbs some of the drugs he's using.

BILLY: But, I guess, the writer is trying to convey a message: look at what you can turn out to be.

SPOTLIGHT: Yes, and also the Absorbing Man has been around a long time, and so it's kind of clever to have him absorbing something like that after years of absorbing various metals and liquids.

BILLY: Hopefully it's good. Just don't take it the wrong way! He's a bad guy and he's stupid to be doing that. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Was Spider-Man a huge icon in Malaysia when you were growing up?

BILLY: He wasn't that big, but he definitely stood out. I remember seeing *Fantastic Four*, too, but the American comics were not that big. It was mostly manga and Chinese comics.

SPOTLIGHT: You do realize that *Marvel Knights Spider-Man* was a huge assignment: to be able to draw Spider-Man was pretty big for your early career at Marvel. Did you enjoy it?

BILLY: I did, but I wish I had a lot more time to get into it.

SPOTLIGHT: You were doing *MK Spider-Man* simultaneous to your time on *X-23*. That would imply that you can be very fast when you need to be!

BILLY: Yes, when I need to be.

SPOTLIGHT: But at the same time, you would prefer not to be doing that amount of work, right?

BILLY: I'd prefer not to have to do that, and especially when you see that *X-23* was an extremely serious book, and the way Reginald Hudlin was writing *MK Spider-Man* it was very humorous, very funny, and I don't think I did any justice to his scripts. Every time I read them,I laughed. It was really hard from the hours doing *X-23* which were all serious and sad, to jump onto the really funny Spider-Man scripts. It was a really hard transition.

SPOTLIGHT: That is interesting that you say that, because it's probably not something that many readers are sensitive to: for the artist, the tone of the work means a lot to the way you will approach your drawing. If it's a serious, dark book, for the artist it might be very hard to transition to the lighter material.

BILLY: Yes, once you get into the groove of doing something, you like to keep it up. When you switch to something else it takes some time to adjust yourself. You may not have a chance to sketch up some things and get comfortable. The projects keep coming and you're like — boom boom boom! You have to keep going.

OOK, IT'S [illegible] ?! [illegible] the end [illegible] of [illegible] ...ished in [illegible] #15, [illegible] ...ce of [illegible] ...mainstream Marvel universe.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the neat things about your *Marvel Knights Spider-Man* run was that it introduced a character named Virtue, a super-powered being that resembled Superman. The interludes that told the stories of his origin were not drawn by you, but were drawn instead by artist Mark Buckingham, and they were a really nice contrast with your work.

BILLY: Yeah, I love it! It was like the 60s-style material. It was a lot better than my stuff!

SPOTLIGHT: It was drawn in a very Kirby-esque manner. They brought Buckingham in to do that, but do you think you would have felt comfortable doing it?

BILLY: I don't think I know how to do that style. I'm more of the 90s style. I'm trying to adjust myself to the more modern Marvel style of work even now, so I don't think I would even know how to do that.

SPOTLIGHT: What kind of artistic steps do you take when you feel you have to adapt your style to better fit new projects you might be working on?

BILLY: Mainly through experimenting.

SPOTLIGHT: When you say you are adapting to a more "Marvel style of drawing," are there certain elements of your style that you are eliminating or lessening?

BILLY: Yes, definitely. Look at the evolution between my first X-Men stories with Chris Claremont, to this one. I have tried to make the figures slightly softer and also more realistic. The Claremont material, I had a sort of cartoony feel to it. For example, the faces of Marvel Girl, you can tell the difference. On the new version, I make it slightly more realistic. With the rendering, I take the rendering line and put in more blacks, and it's almost like I'm sculpting the features of the face. Before, it was almost like I was drawing without a rendering line, but now it feels like it's more realistic, and it's also taking me a lot more time.

SPOTLIGHT: Are you a good gadget drawer? Do you like drawing machines?

BILLY: They are okay to draw. It's one of those things you just have to draw in a comic book. But nothing is more fun to me than drawing figures; facial expressions and action, the motion of the characters.

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of that, one thing that jumped out at me was the battle between Spider-Man and Wolverine in *MK Spider-Man*. Are you proud of these compositions?

BILLY: Yes, some of those pages actually turned out okay.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you have a small group of perspectives that you draw from, or do you try and draw from a wide variety of different angles, using as many different degrees of perspective as you can?

BILLY: Oh, definitely use more angles. You want to make the page more interesting, that's what you have got to do is use many different angles. One of the guys I like is Steve McNiven, he's just amazing, all those angles of his really blow me away.

SPOTLIGHT: Are you influenced by film at all, do you find cues in the way a shot is set up in film?

BILLY: I think unconsciously you it pick up, just like daily observations help influence you.

SPOTLIGHT: You are working on a creator-owned project right now, too. Can you tell a little bit about it?

BILLY: The title is called *Ghost Kid*. Marvel is my first priority, and I

"HE'S MY SENSEI!"

Spotlight spoke with Billy's assistant artist, Joel Gomez, to get some insight into what makes him one of Marvel Comics' rising stars!

I do backgrounds and help with layouts for Billy's artwork. I helped him on *Marvel Knights Spider-Man*, and I also helped him on his first run on *Uncanny X-Men*. One outstanding thing about Billy as an artist is his perspective is very dynamic. Working with him is kind of like working with a composer. He's got really good ideas, really good riffs, and my job is to catch on to the music he's playing and try to stick to the tune. I try to always keep it in line with the story, and keep in mind the vision he's going for, because sometimes there's a lot of room for error. But the fact is, when you're as professional as Billy is, you lay out your work strongly and it conveys really well; it's so easy to read.

It's really fun to work with him, because it's not very much brainwork for me. I just get go to town on it. He's talented enough to give you just enough information to where you say, "I know where he's going with this." And you just follow the groove he's started. And that's the thing, he lays these pages out pretty fast. He can lay a page out in a minute or two and give you a really firm sense of where your eye is supposed to be, how much detail he wants. It becomes a short hand.

One of my favorite moments working with him was on *Marvel Knights Spider-Man*. It was my first time working with him, and near the conclusion of his six-issue story arc, he had the New Avengers fighting with this new character, Virtue. There was a lot of stuff going on all at once, a lot of characters fighting right in the middle of New York City; there were very dynamic scenes of the city, all the super characters, and it was awesome to be able to participate with all of my favorites.

The work I did with Billy got me a job at Wildstorm, so I owe him a lot. He's so easy to learn from. He's my sensei!

have to finish up my tight schedule with *Uncanny X-Men* first, so I have to put a halt to *Ghost Kid*, but I have the preview and first issue done.

Hey, your fans wanna see Ghost Kid one day, but don't let it stand in the way of us getting our regular fix of Uncanny X-Men! "The Rise and Fall of the Shi'Ar Empire" will be a twelve-issue long run of space operatics from Marvel's flagship mutant title, and we look forward to following each issue that Ed and Billy deliver! Thanks for sitting with Marvel Spotlight for a great interview, Billy!

X-23 UNPLUGGED: Two images from Billy Tan's adrenaline rush on *X-23*!

BULLPEN BULLETINS

ITEM! If you're on board the new star-spanning series of Uncanny X-Men by Ed Brubaker and Billy Tan, you'll want to know about the next two issues of MARVEL MILESTONES, which reprint *Uncanny X-Men #275-277.* It features classic stories by Chris Claremont and Jim Lee that pit Xavier's X-Men, the Starjammers and Lilandra against Deathbird, as terrible a foe as the Shi'Ar have ever produced! Featuring the X-Men — led by Wolverine, Psylocke, Jubilee, Storm and others from the early 90s heyday — MARVEL MILESTONES: X-MEN & THE STARJAMMERS PART 1 and 2 will make a nice supplement to the RISE AND FALL OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE, occurring right now in the pages of *Uncanny X-Men*!

ITEM! That last Item! was to let you in on a comic reprint that lets you look back on the X-Men of the past. Well, we have another Item! about an X-Men comic that looks back on the past, but it's not a reprint! Starting in September, rising Marvel writer Jeff Parker (CAPTAIN UNIVERSE/AGENTS OF ATLAS) and veteran Roger Cruz (UNCANNY X-MEN/GHOST RIDER) team up to bring you the stories of the original X-Men in X-MEN: FIRST CLASS! There are still tales to tell of the vintage team of X-Men — Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Angel, Beast and Iceman, led by Charles Xavier — and Parker and Cruz will be bringing a healthy respect for the tales of yore to the telling. If you're a fan of the original X-Men and the simplicity of the mutant universe that they represent, you'll be sure to want to try out *X-Men: First Class.* According to Parker, in one of his stories the X-Men will finally get to take that vacation that the professor always promised! (And if you catch that little nugget of classic X-Men trivia, then you know this book is for you!) Call up your comic shop today and put *X-Men: First Class* first on your pull list!

ITEM! Marvel Comics has always made room for the ladies to take the lead in the four-color funny books we love. Some of the earliest Marvel heroes were the Invisible Girl, Scarlet Witch, the Wasp and Black Widow, and when the 70s arrived, Marvel published several titles which were vehicles for the solo exploits of female heroes: The Cat, Shanna, Ms. Marvel, She-Hulk and Spider-Woman, to name a few! Now, Marvel's collected editions department are gathering a selection of some of these key issues in Marvel history and packaging them as the WOMEN OF MARVEL trade paperback. It's a 224-page collection that will reprint such classic comics as DAZZLER #1, SHANNA #1, MS. MARVEL #1 and THE CAT #1, as well as UNCANNY X-MEN #151-152, featuring a showdown between Storm and Emma Frost; UNCANNY #182, featuring Rogue; UNCANNY #244, featuring the first appearance of Jubilee; and AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #86, with a key early appearance by Natasha Romanov, the Black Widow! And if this collection isn't enough to whet your comic-lovin' appetite, you'll also want to track down the WOMEN OF MARVEL POSTER BOOK, which is a 72-page collection of poster-size comic art that you can pull out and hang on your wall! Featuring the same array of female heroes from the trade collection, plus a whole lot more!

ITEM! Marvel Masterworks do a phenomenal job of giving hardcover comic collectors a chance to add some of Marvel's earliest storylines to their bookshelves in a deluxe format, but there are some storylines that it may take years for Masterworks to reach, and that's where Marvel Classic Premiere Edition hardcovers come in! The first such collection is SPIDER-MAN: KRAVEN'S LAST HUNT, which will reprint one of the all-time great Spider-Man stories that crossed over in WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #32-33, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #393-394 and SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #131-132. Never before had this kind of Kraven story been told, and it really turned Spider-Man fandom on its head when it was first published. Now, Marvel is proud to bring this classic story back to print in a Classic Premiere Edition hardcover!

To find Marvel Comics at a local comic shop, call 1-888-COMICBOOK or visit marvel.com

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